

64

This is the only complete surviving example in Latin of the miniature epic or *epyllion*, a form which dates from Alexandrian times – see especially Callimachus' *Hecale* and Moschus' *Europa* – but which found especial favour with the New Poets of the first century BC (others of the period are known to us by name: Cinna's *Zmyrna*, praised by Catullus and favourably contrasted with Volusius' *Annales* in poem 95; Calvus wrote an *Io*, Cornificius a *Glaucus*, Valerius Cato a *Dictynna*). The poem is not a simple linear 'short epic': the story of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis frames a 'story within a story', with more than half (216 of the 408 lines) of the poem given over to this 'digression' describing a tapestry adorning the marriage bed, the whole central tableau being an example of the device known as *ecphrasis** – the set-piece description of a work of art in narrative form – found in much ancient literature and discussed fully at 50-266n below.

The structure of the poem is as follows:

- 1-30 The meeting of Peleus and Thetis
- 31-49 The human guests arrive: description of the palace.
- 50-264 The tapestry *ecphrasis*
 - 50-1 bridge passage
 - 52-70 Ariadne on the beach
 - 71-5 bridge passage
 - 76-115 Theseus' earlier arrival in Crete: Ariadne falls in love
 - 116-31 bridge passage returns us to Ariadne on the beach
 - 132-201 Ariadne's speech
 - 202-214 bridge passage: Ariadne's curse prompts flashback to
 Theseus' leaving of Athens
 - 215-37 Aegeus' farewell speech
 - 238-48 Ariadne's curse fulfilled
 - 249-50 return to the tapestry
 - 251-64 Bacchus and his entourage arrive
- 265-302 The human guests depart and the gods arrive.
- 303-383 The Fates sing the wedding song
- 384-408 Epilogue.

The meeting of Peleus and Thetis merges immediately into their wedding, the poet's handling of time and ordering of material allows an unusual degree of slippage and flexibility which both strengthens thematic links and also distances the text as an arbitrary literary creation rather than an 'iconic' or linear view of reality. In the *ecphrasis* in particular, the poet begins and ends with Ariadne as depicted in the tapestry: apparently doomed to die and lamenting her fate but in fact about to be saved by a divine saviour whom she cannot see. The background tales of Theseus and his father and the slaying of the Minotaur are brought in to explain how the central figure of Ariadne came to be where the artist has placed her and how her apparent impotence and vulnerability

masks a powerful curse and imminent translation to divine company – the sort of union of god and human, in fact, which Peleus and Thetis exemplify and which the poet misses wistfully at the end of the poem. The viewer of the tapestry would of course see that Ariadne was about to be saved and so would know that her laments are wasted and needless: the reader of the poem is not let into the full details of the picture until her despair has been fully indulged. Thus the thematic coherence of the poem is easily seen: in both tales there is a human being married to a divine being, and the result of both unions is happiness at least for the moment: the magical meeting of the goddess and the man which opens the poem is cruelly shattered in the disillusioned epilogue where the poet laments that such unions do not occur any more. The sea is the peaceful idyllic element on which Peleus first sees Thetis and is also the cruel force (*truculentum* 179) imprisoning Ariadne on the beach until Bacchus flies in – the poet's treatment of the sea is not uniform and to some extent mirrors the mood of the tale (see Curran 175-9). The human sacrifice of Polyxena at the tomb of Peleus' son foretold by the Parcae towards the end recalls the sacrifice of Ariadne's 'brother' the Minotaur at the hands of Theseus and is in turn recalled by the massive sacrifice to Jupiter in 389. Theseus is *ferox* and able to slay monsters, while Achilles will exceed even Theseus in ferocity and carnage. The father of Theseus is a model of a caring parent, and Peleus and Thetis will also go on to have a highly successful son; in fact Peleus is most often seen (in Homer at least) as a sad old father whose son has abandoned him to fight in Troy, and Thetis is also often seen as a figure of mourning (Callimachus *Hymn to Apollo* 2.20-1 etc) for her son – an image which makes the relationship of Theseus and Aegeus analogous rather than contrasted with Peleus/Thetis and Achilles. Even tiny details become themes and find parallels in the inner and the outer narrative: the Nereids' breasts are seen by the mariners (18), Ariadne bares her breasts in despair on the shore (64-5), the mothers of Achilles' victims will beat their breasts (351) in despair at the death of their sons (for the complexity of this image see now Hunter (1991)). The trees are woven into a ship (10), the tale of Ariadne is told on a woven tapestry and features the life-saving power of Theseus' thread to come safely out of the labyrinth (113-5), and the Parcae spin the thread of the future (320-2 etc) which even includes the prophecy that Thetis will pass the *filum* test the morning after her wedding-night (376-80n). Even the language strengthens the unity of the different tales: compare line 19 and line 253 describing the love of Peleus and Bacchus respectively in very similar terms. What all these coherences establish is a feeling that it is a single world which this poem is describing, a world where both Peleus and Theseus are at home; the poet goes out of his way to confuse any sense of 'before and after' in the intertwining of the two tales, even foxing the reader's sense of chronology with the 'first ship' in the opening scene leading up to a tale which depends on a series of ships having been sailing between Athens and Crete for years (*solitam esse* 79). The past is all one, contrasted (ostensibly) at the end with the present, the whole poem creating a subtle *mise-en-abîme**.

Related to this thematic and narratological interweaving is the intertextual use of a range of earlier literature. Catullus alludes to phrases, themes, and characters in Greek and Roman literature and so deepens the texture and the significance of the poem. The opening of the poem, for instance, relies heavily on the echoes of Euripides' (echoed by Ennius') *Medea* and also Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*, texts which insist on the reader seeing the present poem as a narrative of the Voyage of the Argo with Peleus on

board. This contrasts with the view of Apollonius (1.558) that Peleus married Thetis and fathered Achilles before the Argo sailed and the consequent idyllic courtship is astonishing both in chronology and content (Thetis was highly resistant to Peleus in earlier accounts (see below for details)). There are strong echoes of Lucretius in the poem, both of phrases (209), whole descriptions (e.g. the Bacchic noise at 251-64 recalls Lucretius 4. 545-8 and 2.618-20) and large themes (the human sacrifice of Polyxena owes a great deal to Lucretius' Iphigeneia (1. 84-100): the folly of Ariadne's love for Theseus is infused with Lucretius' scathing satire of romantic love at 4.1058-1287). Even the gloomy ending of the poem raises similar questions as the gloomy ending of the *de rerum natura*, and the final view of the gods out of contact with humans is Epicurean in effect if not in motivation (Epicurus' gods keep away to maintain their serenity, Catullus' gods do so out of abhorrence of man's behaviour). Echoes of Homer abound – the similes, the father-son sorrowing of Aegeus-Theseus recalling strongly that of Priam-Hector, the *aristeia* of Achilles – as well as of tragedy (Prometheus, Polyxena), the wedding hymn (the Parcae sing a sinister inversion of the traditional *epithalamium* – on which see introduction to poem 61), the Idyll of Peleus and Thetis falling instantly in love being a marine version of Greek pastoral poetry. Above all, the *ecphrasis* is a stylised but highly original version of a form of static description going back to Homer (see 50-266n). Detailed correspondences are picked up in the commentary: what is important here is the self-conscious manner in which Catullus has used the literature of the past to create a new poem, the echoes merging to form and also colour a new voice.

The predominant area of critical inquiry has been the poet's attitude towards his subject matter, in particular whether the poem is 'optimistic' or 'pessimistic' in its view of human nature and the heroic age. The classic statement of the 'pessimistic' viewpoint is still that of Bramble (1970), who sees disquiet in the poet's elaborate description of the idleness in the countryside, unease at the luxury in the opulent wealth in the palace and positive repugnance in the grisly prophecies of the Fates. The happy wedding of Peleus and Thetis is offset and undermined by the wretched state of the abandoned Ariadne, who thus gives the lie to the heroism and self-sacrifice declared as being the ethos of the past. The narrative itself is full of negative remarks and unhappy echoes – and to make the point inescapably clear the poet appends a gratuitous epilogue full of contemporary *Kulturpessimismus* showing the mood as one of deep disillusion. The *heroum virtutes* are ironically and bitterly 'corrected' by the poem's assertion that 'the Heroic Age was not so very different from contemporary times. It might have been happier in some ways than the present, yet still it contained the germs of future decline.' (Bramble (1970) 41). This powerful view is still with us in a large amount of the scholarly writing on the poem and deserves further critical examination. The assumption, for example, that the future brutality of the child renders the wedding unhappy is questionable, especially when the 'child' is without doubt the greatest warrior in the world of Greek myth. There is nothing to stop the happy couple in Catullus 64 from savouring the pleasure of their own happiness by contrasting it with the (future) unhappiness of others; as in the opening lines of Lucretius Book 2, it is a pleasure to see the sufferings of others when one is safe from danger oneself. This attitude might be seen as *Schadenfreude* but found little guilt in the breast of an Epicurean. Then there is the depiction of the luxury in the palace which would be viewed, Bramble argues, by the 'normal Roman', with 'disapproval' (Bramble (1970) 39); but this is contested by Jenkyns who sees the passage as one of sensuous

delight in the colours, textures (and of course poetic sounds) of the gorgeous palace (Jenkyns, 90-91). Far from being a pejorative description, lines 43-9 are blazingly happy: 'Laughter as a metaphor for bright colour or sparkling light is conventional enough, but to make the house laugh at a scent, so that the visual picture is merged with an element of sheer fantasy, and to make the scent so gorgeous that it is like a caressing touch – this is indeed dazzling.' (Jenkyns 109). The familiar doom-laden reference to Euripides' (and Ennius') *Medea* at the beginning of the poem is seen as sinister by Bramble, but is well explained by Jenkyns as the poet's use of the 'colour' of an earlier poet without automatically assuming his 'intention' as well.

The seeds of the pessimistic view had already been planted, in Kinsey (1965), who notes the ironic elements in the poet's depiction of the heroic age but draws a different conclusion from Bramble. 'Catullus does not take the grief of the mothers ... seriously because neither he nor his audience take the stories of the heroic age seriously. His attitude is ... that ... of the realist ironically retelling a story found in some romantic novel which no one regards as anything except light entertainment.' ((Kinsey (1965) 930). This jocular debunking of the heroic age is one interpretation of the text, but not one that has found much favour as it stands. Curran (1969) agrees that the poet's depiction of the Heroic Age is ironic, but urges a more judicious judgement: 'Catullus' attitude is a combination of a nostalgia for the glamour of the heroic world with an ironic realisation that it is only an irrelevant dream ... Myth becomes a metaphor for the present, an unpleasant present but, as the poem as a whole declares, it was never any better.' (Curran (1969) 191-2).

Over against this is the argument of Putnam, who in an influential article (1961) urged that Catullus was voicing his own anguish in his relationship with Lesbia in this poem: Putnam finds echoes of the poem in various of the 'autobiographical' shorter poems and concludes that the poem is a 'personal statement', a sort of *roman à clef* which allows the poet the disguise inside which he can indulge a moralising coda which he would have found difficult *in propria persona*. The difficulty with this, as with all such documentary interpretations, is simply that it demands the foreknowledge of the reader to understand the poem. If our appreciation of this text is dependent on being intimate with the poet's unhappy love-life, then one wonders why the poet did not make this more explicit and accessible to the reader. The epilogue was the ideal opportunity to grind the personal axes, but instead the poet here brings out instances of misbehaviour which elude the most energetic detective-work in placing in contemporary Rome, let alone in Catullus' own life. It is in this respect that Konstan's attempt to see the poem as an 'indictment of Rome' falls down. It is not that the 'negative voices' in the text are not there – simply that it reduces the text to a programme which would leave it a great deal less ambitious and less successful than it is. Furthermore, the moralist using the poem as a stick with which to beat contemporary society would have picked a more appropriate set of crimes to shame contemporary Rome than the farrago of sexual and familial misdemeanours we find here: surely the sort of critique which we find in Lucretius (who *does* attack luxury (2.20-36) and political ambition (3.995-1002) and corruption (3. 59-73)) would have been exactly the style and the material needed here – if that was the poet's intention.

There is undoubtedly a case for the 'pessimistic' view of the poem, then, but by itself it will not suffice. This poetry is marked by coherences (already noted) and contrasts, such as the use of tragedy in writing epyllion, or setting the happy wedding of Thetis

against the backdrop of the unhappy amour of Ariadne: above all, this is a poem of surprises where the reader is kept on his toes by the poet's refusal to supply the expected – the poem opens as if it is about the Argonauts but goes on to depict the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, the wedding-song is sung by the grotesque Parcae and is about the brutal future of their unborn son and not about their present happiness, the wedding-couch is decorated with a tapestry in dubious taste for the occasion, the coda of the poem is an unexpected account of why gods no longer consort with humans, full of sinister moral allusions, the indulgence of Ariadne's grief at enormous length deludes the audience out of expecting the depicted denouement in her salvation by Bacchus. Any interpretation of this text must take account of this constant shifting perspective, this self-conscious playing with the reader's expectations and sensitivities.

We must also be careful of judging the poem in anachronistic terms. The tale of Ariadne, for instance, is undoubtedly sad but has a happier ending which the viewer of the tapestry could see and the reader of the poem will soon be shown. The wrong done to her is real and her grief is genuine – but she gets ample revenge (albeit at the expense of the innocent Aegeus) and ends up married to a glorious god rather than to a fickle human. The pain is made bearable by the denouement. The result is something akin to the terrible 'Lying Tale' told by Odysseus to his father in the final book of Homer's *Odyssey*, where the old man is teased by his disguised son with a deceitful tale that his son is dead, only to find that his son is there all the time unrecognised telling the tale. This sort of teasing seems cruel to us, perhaps, but has the artistic effect of both dramatic irony (we and one character know something which another character does not) and also enhanced joy when the truth is told and the reunion is effected. The 'teasing' element in the tale of Ariadne is well-played out. Certainly, she is unhappy and laments her human lover's faithlessness – but we can smile at her misfortune knowing that she (like Peleus) has a divine lover waiting for her who will put everything to rights. This must to some extent give the lie to the 'pessimistic' critics who see her as a dark cloud on the wedding – although the poet does not forecast the future happiness of Bacchus and Ariadne as such a view could hardly be portrayed on the tapestry. The grief will become joy, the solitude and silence (186-7) is swiftly to be shattered when the Bacchic troupe roars into view: and all through the magic of Art.

If Ariadne is a sad woman about to be made happy, Thetis is the opposite: Homer describes Thetis as 'extremely reluctant' to marry Peleus (*Iliad* 18.434: Clausen (1982) 18) and had to be wrestled into it. Apollonius (4. 865-79) has her leave Peleus immediately after the birth of Achilles, who was brought up by centaur foster-parents but still 'longed for Thetis' milk' (Hunter (1991) 255 citing Apollonius 4. 813) and even suggesting that the name Achilles may be derived from the Greek *a-cheilos*, 'the one who did not bring his lips to his mother's breast'. In Homer's *Iliad* Achilles says of his father: 'he outshone all men for riches ... the gods gave him, a mortal man, a goddess for a wife: but even on him did the god pile suffering, for he had no generation of strong sons, but only one doomed child, and I give him no thought as he grows old ...' (24. 534-40; cf. 19. 334-7)) Homer paints a very intimate picture of the relationship between Thetis and her son (e.g. *Iliad* 18.67-144), but the marriage of Peleus and Thetis was not harmonious in many ancient accounts of the tale except this one (Pindar for example praises Peleus' good fortune but recognises both the character of his wife (*Isthmian* 8.25-32), the struggle for her hand (*Nemean* 3.35f, 4.62ff) and the grief Peleus suffered in

losing his only son (*Pythian* 3.87ff)). Catullus does not prophesy the future of the happy couple, contenting himself with the forecast of the deeds of their son Achilles, and the resulting texture of his comments about the wedding match itself sound oddly disingenuous (19-21, 334-6) in their naive simplicity. Even the chronology of the myth is reversed: in most accounts, the wedding of Peleus and Thetis predates the voyage of the Argo by a long time. Catullus' conflation of the voyage of the Argo and the marriage of Peleus and Thetis allows him to play on the similarity between this couple and the tragic pairing of Jason and Medea – a similarity played on by the echoes of Euripides' and Ennius' *Medea* in the opening lines and by the resemblance between Catullus' Ariadne and Apollonius' Medea. It does however allow the idyll of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis to give way to the epic carnage of the Homeric hero Achilles and the tragic figure of Polyxena, the narrative enlivened by outpourings of highly charged rhetoric, the text then becoming a self-conscious exploration of generic boundaries which (again) shows the magic transforming power of Art.

Jenkyns ((1982) 85-150) sees the artistic qualities in this text better than anyone and shows well how the text resists reductive explanation. He urges comparison with the cult of Dandyism and the aesthetics of *l'art pour l'art*, seeing the poem as an invitation into a world of brilliance and colour and light. I would like to take this argument further.

Catullus is using the clash between the brilliant pleasure of the poetry and the (at times) disagreeable details of the narrative to enhance the status of the text as a work of art. The poet plants a 'pessimistic' view of love (as depicted in the plight of Ariadne), of family life (as seen in Theseus and his father, in Ariadne and her 'brother' the Minotaur), and of religion (in the poet's assertion that the gods have now given up all contact with humanity because of our wickedness) and ends up with a gloomy conclusion. The only 'moral' inference from this which can be drawn is that none of these things is reliable as an ethical ideal and that in fact the only ideals which could be entertained are aesthetic ones, of poetry in particular. The 'epilogue' with which the poem ends is a familiar form of personal closure* of a poetic text (see parallels in the commentary *ad loc*), bringing the mythical past firmly back into the present, putting the poet's signature on the narrative in a way which is self-referential and ironic. The sins which Catullus lists are difficult to pin down to specific sinners (as shown by the wildly divergent views of scholars on the respective culprits) and amount to a form of contrast between the heroic past and the unheroic present which however fails to convince the reader with respect to either the past or the present (fratricide, for instance, being the offence which Ariadne assisted in to her cost but is named as a 'modern' vice). The very imperfection of the subject-matter casts a satisfying glow back upon the perfection of the means of its exposition and elevates the poet not as a moral Jeremiah casting abuse at his contemporaries but as an aesthetic who has found a way through the impure dross even of the 'heroic' age (let alone his own age) to produce out of it all a pearl of perfection.

1-7 The opening sentence contains a typical piece of Alexandrian learning and allusion: the pine trees 'born from Pelion's head' remind us of the goddess Athene was born from Jupiter's head and this oblique image is to be deciphered by the reader as referring to the ship *Argo* made from these trees. Equally striking is the element of surprise in the very idea that pine trees can be born on the top of a mountain and later be swimming through

the waves; throughout the poem there is a sense of the 'monstrosity' of such perversion of nature, which allows the poet to enjoy teasing synecdoches* such as line 6 ('to run the salt ways on a swift poop'). The opening five lines contain six proper names, both to set the scene firmly for the reader and also to conjure up the world of legend in which this tale will unfold.

- 1 **Once ...** : the legendary, almost fairy-tale beginning locates the tale in the heroic past; and the repeated use of 'they say' or 'it is said' (1, 19, 76, 124, 212) also distances the narrator from his subject-matter in a lightly ironic manner typical of Callimachus (see fr.612 Pf ('I sing nothing which is not attested'), *Hymn* 5.56 ('not my words, but those of others'))
- 3 **Phasis** is the chief river in Colchis, flowing from the Caucasus mountains into the Black Sea. This line is the first of the 30 lines in this poem which have a spondaic fifth foot – a mannerism common to the poets of the generation, if Cicero is to be believed (*Letters to Atticus* 7.2.1). The effect of such a rhythm is to slow down the pace of the line, especially when (as here) the fourth foot is also (unusually) spondaic, suggestive perhaps of the long journey to be made even when the ship was 'running'. The line is in fact forged from three lines of Apollonius Rhodius ('the streams of Phasis' (2. 1277-8) and 'belonging to Aeetes' (2. 1279)): the Greek names sandwich the rest of the line.
- 4-5 **chosen young men:** The Argonauts sailed from Greece to Colchis (eastern end of the Black Sea) in search of the Golden Fleece from King Aeetes: their leader was Jason, and his success in the enterprise was only secured with the help of Medea, the king's daughter, whom Jason took back to Greece and then abandoned in Corinth. The echo here of the treatment of Medea with that of Ariadne will be stressed as the poem unfolds, especially as Medea slew her brother.
strength ... young: The second phrase is strictly unnecessary, being a decoration of the first: this kind of repetition is expansive and effective, part of the Homeric tradition of story-telling with its formulaic epithets, and sets Catullus in the epic tradition. There is something very appropriate about the poet describing the youths (literally) as the 'oak of Argive youth' – a metaphor indicating their choice quality but also summoning up the image of oak men sailing in pine trees.
- 6 **salt straits:** an epic synecdoche* for the sea, as *puppi* (literally 'poop deck') is synecdoche for 'ship'.
- 7 **sweeping ... fir-wood:** The sentence finishes with a flourish: the men are sweeping the sky blue plains with their fir-wood palms: almost a 'Golden Line' (adjective, adjective, verb, noun, noun, as at 59, 129, 163, 235, 351) but the second adjective and the verb are here inverted. The palms are metaphorical* for 'oars', *abiegnis* giving us the detail of the wood used for them which was not the same as that of the ship.
- 8 **the goddess:** Athene, the 'citadel' in question being the Acropolis of Athens. The Argonauts need divine help not only in building the ships but also in protecting their home-towns while they are away winning the fleece.
- 9 **she herself:** *ipsa* is somewhat surprising in the light of the usual tradition that Argus made the ship under Athene's guidance (Apollonius of Rhodes 1.18-19, 111-2). The quality of the ship is brought out by the fact that it can 'fly' even

when the breeze is only 'light'. the metaphor *currus* (only here in extant Latin applied to a ship, although the phrase 'chariot of the sea' is found in Greek) indicating that it is as swift as a chariot.

- 10 **web:** *texta* is a metaphor* drawn from weaving, in which the crossing of stitches is compared to the crossing of beams: the theme of weaving is important in the later depiction of the tapestry narrating Ariadne's plight. The metaphor also (again) stresses the enormity of the task – weaving with ... *pine trees* is something only a god could do.

- 11 **Amphitrite:** a Nereid, wife of Poseidon, and so stands by metonymy* for the sea. The reason for the circumlocution is not simply variation or erudition; it also sets up a theme of femininity being abused – in this case the sea by the ship, then the nymphs by the gaze of the sailors, finally of course the abuse of Ariadne by the 'perfidious sailor' Theseus. *prima* lands the poet in chronological difficulties, given the tradition that the Argo was the first ship ever to sail; for if the Argo was the first ship ever to sail, but Peleus has a tapestry of Theseus' voyage on his marriage-bed, then when did Theseus sail? Immediately after the Argo but before the wedding? But the Athenians had been 'in the habit of' (line 79) sending ships to Crete before Theseus went on his voyage, and the poet later uses the word *priscis* to describe the figures on the tapestry.

imbuit is a surprising word to use here: its basic meaning is to 'drench' and it then has the sense of our 'baptise' 'initiate', usually and most obviously used of the first wetting of a new boat or new oars (e.g.4.17). It is paradoxical here to suggest that they 'wet' the sea (which is already wet) to introduce it to sailing.

- 12-13 **ploughed:** The perverse violence done to Amphitrite is well evoked by the strong verb *proscidit* ('ploughed', an action inappropriate for the sea) the general movement of the sea brought out by the mention of winds, the twisting of the waters with the oars and the consequent foaming waves. Note here how *aequor* means any plain surface, and so with *proscidit* we receive a metaphor of 'ploughing a field'. 'Man not only makes the trees of the mountain forest swim, but also ploughs the sea like a new field.' (Curran 176) *torta* is perhaps a metaphor for the action of curling-tongs (oars) to curl the waves of the sea, as Quinn suggests.

14-18 The sea-nymphs appear, never having seen ships before: one of them is Thetis, who falls in love with one of the sailors, Peleus. In Homer the funeral of Achilles (son of Thetis) is described to him: 'your mother, on hearing the news, came out of the sea, with immortal sea-girls all around her' (*Odyssey* 24. 47-8). Similarly, Thetis stirs up the Nereids and emerges from the sea to comfort her son weeping for Patroclus (*Iliad* 18.65ff)

- 14 The line cleverly leaves the key words until the end: 'out of the white swell of the sea they raised ... *faces*, watery Nereids ... ' The reader picks out the identity of the vision as slowly as the sailors did.

- 15 **prodigy:** *monstrum* conveys the notion of 'omen, portent' and is elsewhere used of the wooden horse at Troy (Vergil *Aeneid* 2. 245) and Cleopatra (Horace *Odes* 1.37.21). The ship is portentous in many ways – it presages the future of navigation, the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, the birth of Achilles and the deaths he will cause etc. What are effective here is the mutual wonder – no doubt the

nymphs are seen as *monstra* just as much as the ship is – and the slow gazing four-word line (one of very few in this poem – cf. 77, 115, 319 and none at all in the other poems), complete with fifth-foot spondee.

- 16-18 **On that day ...** : The poet dwells on the vision of the nymphs. The insertion of *haud* (Bergk) is the most plausible correction of the mss reading: Goold's *haud ante alia* would suggest simply that this was the first time that sailors saw nymphs (but now it is commonplace), whereas Bergk's *atque haud alia* would mean 'never before or since', which ties in better with the epilogue's assertion that gods do not allow themselves to be seen any more (408).
- 17 **with their eyes:** *oculis* is of course unnecessary but adds to the wonder and reinforces the idea of seeing already connoted in *viderunt* and also in the periphrasis *luce* ('light' meaning 'day'). Nor is it enough that mortal men saw nymphs, but they saw them naked – the poet expresses this as a general term first ('with bared body') before going for the specific point of focus in their breasts.
- 18 **breasts:** *nutricum* is a surprising word to use for 'breasts': the word means 'wet-nurse' and may be an elaborate pun derived from Greek – the Greek words *titthos* (breast) and *titthe* (wet-nurse) both have the genitive plural *titthon*, an effect which the poet attempts to reproduce in Latin. The thematic relevance of breasts is important later in the poet's references to the milky breasts of Ariadne (65, ironic, as she has no possibility of rearing children) and again to the dried out breasts of the mothers whose sons Achilles will kill (351). Cairns (1984) notes that in Artemidorus 2.37-8 it is stated that a dream of Aphrodite emerging from the sea and naked to the waist was a particularly good omen for sea-farers. Closer to the present passage is Apollonius 4.940 where the Nereids reveal their bare legs (pointed out by Hunter (1991) 254).
- 19-21 **Then ... then ... then:** The threefold repetition with polyptoton* of *tum Theti-* over these lines is emphatic and adds to the incantatory effect of the narrative. The two names are immediately juxtaposed in 19, just as the love of the two in the story is immediate.
- 20 **human:** *humanos* picks up the mild outrage of *mortales* in line 17; though he was mortal, Thetis did not spurn him.
- 21 **father himself:** The background to this is well-known: Jupiter (the 'father himself') wanted Thetis himself until Prometheus (or, in Pindar *Isthmian* 8, Themis) told him that the child of Thetis was destined to be greater than his father (Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 911ff).
- 22 **O heroes ...** : The poet moves into apostrophe*, first of the race of heroes (22-4) and then of Peleus himself (25-30) This device was known in Greek as a *makarismos*, an exclamation expressing the degree of happiness enjoyed by the addressee: for a similar address to an individual see poem 51, to a group of people see Vergil *Georgics* 2. 458-74. *saeculorum tempore* ('at that time of the generations') looks like a pleonasm* in the grand hymnic manner but actually reveals a debt to the 'Golden race' theory found in Hesiod *Works and Days* where the golden race gives way to the silver race, and so on: after the bronze race had wiped themselves out there came the race of heroes who were actually better than the bronze or silver races. Only the golden race surpassed them in quality of life;

and the poet plays with the pastoral idealism of typical 'golden age' themes later on.

- 23 **race of gods:** *deum genus* may perhaps have been prompted (as Fordyce suggests) by Hesiod's phrase 'the divine race of heroic men' (*Works and Days* 159): the word 'hero' commonly came to indicate people who had one divine and one human parent (e.g. Hercules, Aeneas, Achilles) who thus rank midway between gods and men. The Veronese Scholiast on Vergil *Aeneid* 5.80 quotes this passage as *salvete deum gens o bona matrum progenies salvete iter ...* which demands the insertion of line 23b (missing from the manuscripts). The half-line cannot be recovered to finish 23b, and the most plausible filler is that of Peerlkamp who writes the line:

progenies, salvete iter<um salvete bonarum>.

- 24 **often:** The sentiment is not implemented as they are not so addressed again, but the formula is common enough in hymns (see e.g. Homeric Hymn 3.546). Note here the inverted repetition of *vos ego ... meo vos*.
- 25 **wedding:** *taedis* ('wedding torches') here stands by synecdoche* for 'wedding'.
- 26 **mainstay:** *columen* is a metaphor for 'protector'. The privilege accorded to Peleus is emphasised by the epanalepsis* of *ipse/ipse* framed by the pair *Iuppiter ... divum genitor*. As we have seen (21n) Jupiter had very good reasons for 'giving up his love'.
- 28-30 **Was it ... ?:** The apostrophe ends with rhetorical questions with anaphora* of *tene*. Thetis was the child of Nereus and Doris (his sister), who were both children of Tethys and her brother Oceanus. In this passage the permission for the match seems to have been given by the grandparents rather than the parents, the poet showing his erudition in producing the names.

31-42 The Wedding guests arrive. The predominant tense of the verbs in this section is present, after the initial *advenere* (32). The theme of brightness is strongly established (*luces*) at the start and picked up again in 44-49.

- 31 **longed-for:** *optatae* picks up *optato* from 22 and remains a constant theme of the poem, where (e.g.) Peleus and Thetis have been longing for this day – and also Ariadne longs for Theseus, Aegeus longs for Theseus, the Fates sing of the future in terms which are alternately desirable and horrible. The tension between hope and reality is one of the poignant themes of this text.
- 32-3 **throngs:** The whole of Thessaly crowds into the palace just as the words overspill the line in enjambement*. Note here how the same statement is made twice: first in a 'straight' neutral tone and then with more telling description. *domus* becomes *regia*, *frequentat* becomes *oppletur*, *conventu* becomes *laetanti coetu*.
- 34 **gifts:** The humans' gifts are not described, whereas the gifts of the gods are revealed in detail (279ff).
- 35 **Cieros:** the mss read *siros* which would suggest Scyros, an island lying in the Aegean and geographically inappropriate here in a catalogue of Thessalian towns. The only connection of Scyros with our story is that it was there that Achilles' mother tried to hide her son to prevent him going to Troy: the sort of connection

which would prompt a learned scribe to 'correct' *siros* to Scyros, but not likely to be correct.

- 35-7 Cieros, Crannon, Larisa and Pharsalus were towns in Thessaly. Phthia is famous as the birthplace of Achilles and is in the south of Thessaly, while Tempe (the valley of the river Peneus between the mountains Ossa and Olympus) is actually in the north. For the proverbial beauty of Tempe see Theocritus 1.67, Horace *Odes* 1.7.4, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1. 568-73: what is emphasised here is that for the wedding of Peleus and Thetis people will leave even Tempe behind. The poet produces variation in his list of names: note the chiasmic* *Crannonisque domos ... moenia Larisaea* and the repetition of *Pharsalum ... Pharsalia*, the names being in key positions at the beginning of the line and immediately after the caesura. The verbs are also in two pairs: *deseritur ... linquant* on the one hand, *coeunt ... frequentant* on the other.

38-42 The neglect of agriculture as the farmers leave their land to go to the wedding. Catullus has taken the familiar 'golden age' theme of men not working the land (Tibullus 2.1.5-7, Vergil *Eclogues* 4.40-1 etc) but ends his picture of rural idleness with detail much less glamorous as the ploughs rust away. The whole vignette is of course hyperbolic: the length of time it takes to attend a wedding is hardly enough to see all this ruin in the fields, and Catullus' purpose is therefore either playfully ironic (sending up a literary theme) or else darkly moralistic (as urged by Bramble). The style of the lines is moreover highly organised: note the extreme assonances* and alliterations* of (e.g.) *mollescunt colla ... humilis curvis purgatur* etc.

- 38 **grow soft:** *mollescunt* i.e. because the bullocks are no longer pulling the plough and so their hardened necks grow soft again.
- 39 **low-growing:** Vines were often made to grow supported on trees (as in 62. 49-55), but sometimes as here were allowed to grow low towards the ground, when the weeds around them would need clearing.
- 40 As Fordyce notes, the four spondees which begin this line well express the lumbering effort of the bulls.
- 41 **pruners' hook:** the pruners have to thin out the shade of trees to allow the sunlight to reach the grapes, especially if the vines are growing up the trees.
- 42 Like line 7, almost a 'golden line'.

43-49 **The master's house:** Quinn well compares the sequence to that of foreshortening the distance in a work of art: first we see the crowded palace, then 'the crowds which stream towards it, then the deserted countryside; lastly we follow the crowds in the palace through the scenes of splendour to the centre-piece, the marriage-bed.' The description of the palace is one of lavish and extravagant wealth – again, it is unclear whether the poet intends us to feel envy, disgust or simply admiration for this affluence. There is no doubt about the contempt which Catullus' contemporary Epicureans would have felt – see the sneering mockery of precisely this sort of wealth at Lucretius 2. 20-36.

- 43 **master's:** *ipse*, as often, means here 'the master'. *recessit* is also an artistic term, denoting the receding of the palace away from the eye of the beholder, and the word *regia* itself 'recedes' (by enjambement*) into the next line.

- 44-6 **brilliant ... gleaming:** the poet stresses the idea of brightness and light with the sequence: *fulgenti splendent auro ... argento candet ebur ... collucent ... splendida*. The shining brightness in the palace contrasts with the scaly rust in the fields; some of the imagery is tautologous* – the *regia* has *regali gaza*, for instance.
- 46 **rejoices:** *gaudet* is a nice use of the pathetic fallacy*, as the house shares the joy of its guests; compare the joy and laughter of Lake Sirmio in 31.12-14.
- 47-9 **wedding-couch:** The marriage-bed is the climax of this description: the *lectus genialis* was placed in the atrium during and after a Roman wedding: the word *pulvinar* connotes the couch reserved for the images of gods, and is of course appropriate here for the wedding of a goddess.
- 48-9 **Indian ... purple ... crimson:** The colour contrast is pleasing: the bed adorned with Indian tooth (i.e. white) is covered with a purple bed-spread. The dye *purpura* (derived from the *conchylus* i.e. the shellfish *murex brandaris*) denotes both the colour and also the wealth of its owner, being a universal symbol of affluence and status in the ancient world – senators for example wore togas with a purple stripe upon them.

50-266 ECPHRASIS.

We now move to the *ecphrasis*, the story within the story, the depiction on the tapestry of Ariadne abandoned by Theseus on the island of Naxos. As will immediately be obvious, the poet does not tell the tale in strictly chronological sequence. The tale of Ariadne in 'fact' went as follows:

1. Theseus leaves Athens
2. Theseus meets Ariadne and slays the minotaur
3. Theseus takes Ariadne away and abandons her
4. Ariadne awakes, abandoned.
5. Ariadne curses Theseus
6. Theseus forgets to change the sails and causes his father's death.
7. Bacchus rescues Ariadne

The order in the poem is: 4, 2, 3, 5, 1, 6, 7.

The links between the outer and the inner story are many and various – a male mortal (Peleus) marries a goddess, a female mortal (Ariadne) ends up being married to a god (Bacchus): happy love of the outer story is contrasted with (temporarily) unhappy love, wedding oaths are kept by Peleus but broken by Theseus, and so on. The beginning (50-1) and the end (265-6) of the section is clearly marked by similar wording, a form of rhetorical closure imitated also in the beginning and ending of the two speeches within the *ecphrasis* (Ariadne's lament 130-1, 202 and Aegeus' speech 213-4, 238-40).

In ancient criticism the term *ecphrasis* meant any 'poetic or rhetorical description, including descriptions of landscape (*topothesia*), buildings, battles and storms.' (Laird (1993) 18). In modern criticism the term tends to be used especially of the set-piece description of a visual work of art, such as the depiction of the Shield of Achilles (Homer *Iliad* 18. 478-613), the mantle of Jason (Apollonius Rhodius 1.730-767), the shield of Aeneas (Vergil *Aeneid* 8. 608-731). In crudely simply terms, this story 'freezes' the narrative of Peleus and Thetis on their wedding day in order to 'unfreeze' a decoration

observed by the human guests at that wedding: when the *ecphrasis* is over the wedding 'unfreezes' and continues (267ff) directly from 49, as if nothing has happened.

The fascinating aspect of this particular *ecphrasis* is just how 'disobedient' it is, in Laird's terminology: i.e. it does not content itself with describing what a real picture before the poet's eyes could reasonably show but goes beyond the picture to a narrative prompted by it. It is not simply that the poet gives us flashbacks of explanatory narrative material (*nam perhibent* ... (76) etc): nor that the poet conveys sound-effects, thought-processes, and feelings; not even that the two-dimensional silent characters in this picture utter long speeches which no painter could ever have conveyed and which no other ancient *ecphrasis* ever attempted. The poet turns the spatial distance between Ariadne and Bacchus into a narrative/temporal distance between her waking up alone and abandoned to the point where she is about to be rescued. This deliberate confounding of one artistic illusion by subverting it into another is one of the most strikingly original features of the whole poem. To underline this process the poet interrupts the time-sequence with flashbacks and then delays the arrival of Bacchus – which on the tapestry is of course there 'all along' – leaving the reader to deduce that on the picture the heroine had her back to the saving god. To make the artistic contrast of temporal/audible narrative and static mute visualisation all the more pregnant, the poet deliberately juxtaposes references to the sounds of the 'narrative' with a reminder of the (obviously silent) 'picture' (the Bacchic troupe is a band playing and shouting (255-64) followed immediately by the reminder that this noisy scene is in fact a silent picture (265), discussed by Laird (1993) 21) and leaves teasing reminders of the pictorial quality of the tale paradoxically in the words which the (silent) characters speak ('all is silent' complains Ariadne 186) alongside descriptions of the noises to be heard (e.g. the shore is *fluentisono* (52)).

The poet, it might be urged, is using the tradition of the *ecphrasis* simply as a literary convention to tack two stories together. Rather as later on Ovid uses more or less successful connections to link tales in his *Metamorphoses*, so here Catullus wishes to tell the tale of Ariadne inside the tale of Peleus and uses this literary device to effect it. Nobody is fooled by this trick and Catullus mocks himself several times for doing so, both implicitly (the 'sound effects' listed above) and explicitly (the apology for digressing at 116-7 followed by a digression). The poet's use of the *ecphrasis* shows that he is a *doctus poeta* indeed, well versed in the Alexandrian artifices of poets such as Callimachus and aiming to tickle the palate of his cultivated, equally *doctus* readership with this oblique and self-referential bow to the artistry of the past.

There is, however, more to it than that. Catullus is using the artistry of the past in a learned and skilful manner, of course, and his purpose is primarily aesthetic rather than ethical or protreptic*: but the blurring of the distinction between genres and then the confounding of narrative and pictorial, of static and dynamic, of tale and picture is intended to do more than simply entertain readers thirsty for novelty. The whole poem is cast into doubt as itself a limited expression of verbal signs, whose significance is forever in flux and yet whose magic can convey the past and even bring the dead to life. The *ecphrasis* shows us the dead image animated: the poem as a whole similarly aims to animate the irrecoverably past world of legend and mythology, of gods walking with men and heroes slaying their enemies like a man ploughing a field, the idyll of love, the epic of warfare and the tragedy of bloodshed. The irony of course is that the pictorial silent

characters do all the talking, while the 'real' characters (Thetis, Jupiter, Peleus etc) are in fact silent until we get to the Parcae who paint a vision of the future in words, their prophecy taking over the narrative voice (marked by the refrain) from the poet. Often the reader has the impression that the whole text is a series of 'tableaux' (as Quinn urges), set-piece descriptions of (e.g.) love at first sight, a wedding feast, a procession of gods. The mastery of narrative perspective is such that the reader might well wonder whether the distinction between *ecphrasis* and non-*ecphrasis* is itself false, and that far from being merely a way of cobbling together two tales this device holds the key to the whole poem as an exercise in poetic artistry inviting admiration and pleasure by the sheer mastery of form, content and narrative skill.

- 51 **heroisms ... great:** The language here is ironic. The only man who qualifies for the title 'hero' in this tale is Theseus, and his behaviour is anything but heroic. Quinn has a problem with the poet's ironic stance towards the past, but the apostrophe* at 22-30 is all part of the 'heroic' mood which the next episode will shatter, while the epilogue 384-408 is itself hardly to be taken at face value as a recommendation of the past over the present.
- 52-57 **gazing forward ... :** The eye fixes first upon the island, then on Theseus sailing away, and only then on Ariadne, who is not named until line 54; she then monopolises attention for the rest of the sentence.
- 52 **Dia:** is the island where, according to Homer (*Odyssey* 11.321) Ariadne was killed on her way from Crete to Athens, a different version of the legend from the one we are reading here. In classical times it was called Naxos. The compound adjective *fluentisono* is one of several in the poem (cf. *clarisonus* 320, *raucisonus* 263; such compounds are common in Lucretius). There is of course no way in which a pictorial representation of a scene can convey sounds – part of the convention of the *ecphrasis* is that it fleshes out the limitations of the pictorial form with details of non-visual aspects of the scene. *prospectans* on the other hand is quite clearly an indication of the direction in which Ariadne is facing – out to sea looking at Theseus' departing ship.
- 53 The alliteration* of *Th ... c ... c ... c ... c ... t* is striking.
- 54-5 **uncontrolled madness:** *indomitos ... furores* is almost a tautology, as it is in the nature of *furor* (madness, love, passion) to be *indomitus* (unrestrained). What gives the word *furor* added edge here is the following line; 'nor does she believe that she is seeing what she sees' picks up the strong theme found in Lucretius that romantic love is a form of hallucination in which the lover does not see the truth about his beloved (4. 1037-1287, esp. 1153-76). Catullus, in a playful allusion to this idea, has Ariadne full of *furor* and hence blinded with passion but because of her passion she does not yet believe her eyes although as a matter of fact they are telling her the truth: she cannot yet believe what is true, but has all along believed the lies that Theseus has spun her. This theme of truth and deception is further amplified in *fallaci* (56).
- 57 **lonely:** *sola* is an example of transferred epithet (hypallage*) – it is not the sand which is lonely but the girl who is standing upon it. The poet manages to juxtapose the three strong adjectives *desertam ... sola miseram* in the first half of the line, thus giving the greatest possible emphasis to the girl's plight.

- 58 The young man's rapid flight is well evoked by the sequence of dactyls and the uneven rhythm of the ending of the line, where *pellit vada remis* produces clash of ictus and accent at a point in the verse where ictus and accent normally coincide.

Being *immemor* is later to prove Theseus' undoing (200-250).

- 59 **leaving ... storm:** A neat combination of natural description and metaphor* in a 'golden line': mention of a windy storm is natural at the seashore, but here we also have a literary cliché of faithless words being cast on the winds – cf. 142, 70.4.
- 60 **seaweed:** a vivid detail; note also the affectionate diminutive *ocellis*.
- 61-2 **statue ... tosses:** A paradoxical phrase: a static work of art (a picture) shows a woman frozen like a statue – but it is a statue of a Bacchant, who is the least static of all women, and her surface immobility hides deep emotional turmoil underneath – and then we see her clothes falling off in sequence. The mention of the Bacchant is of course ironic in view of her later salvation by Bacchus himself, and the lament *eheu* may be either a reminder of, or in ironic contrast to, the cry of Bacchic joy *evoe* (255 Laird (1993) 21). Note here the epanalepsis* of *prospicit* (cf. 26n) and the appropriate use of *fluctuat* to describe the flood of feelings she has – a word well suited to the swelling and tossing of the sea.
- 63-7 **not keeping ... veiled:** Ariadne's loss of her clothes is partly ironically futile sexual signalling to a departing lover, partly unconscious sexual signalling to a new lover whom she cannot see (Bacchus), partly an expression of her grief that she does not care about looking 'decent', exactly as is done by Andromache lamenting at Homer *Iliad* 22. 468-70. The clothes are described as 'delicate' and 'light' – their removal being thus easier and the eroticism enhanced.
- 63 **blonde:** *flavo* most heroes and heroines have blonde/fair hair; see 66.62, 68.130 and notes.
- The *mitra* was a bonnet, fastened with ribbons under the chin, associated with the East.
- 63-5 **veiled:** A general statement (her torso no longer clothed) followed by a specific focus (her milky breasts not bound) exactly as at 17-18. The breasts are 'milky' in an ironic statement of futility as they will have no chance of suckling Theseus' children; the *strophium* (also known as the *mamillare*) was the band tied around the body with a twist between the breasts. Nisbet (386), however, points out that *velatum* is probably wrong, as the group of lines 63-5 is perfectly balanced: each of the three lines has six words which perfectly correspond to a word in the other two lines (*non* – *non* – *non*: *retinens* – *contecta*- *vincta*; *mitram* – *amictu*-*strophio*; *subtilem* – *levi* – *tereti*; *vertice* – *pectus*- *papillas*) The exception is *flavo* – *velatum* – *lactentis*, where the two outer words denote colour while the middle term does not. Nisbet proposes therefore *variaturum* to suggest the breasts lined and coloured with veins: this would point forward to *variabunt* in 351 (used there of the aged breasts of the Parcae) and would also neatly correspond to *flavo* and *lactentis* with a minimum of emendation.
- 66-7 **slipped right off:** The casting of her clothes – which would be a significant act for a Roman woman – was mocked by the waves which lapped them at her feet (*alludebant* has the element *ludus* in it).

- 68 **headband ...** : The poet picks up *mitra* from 63 and *amictus* from 64, adding the descriptive epithet *fluitantis* – most plausibly applied to the largest item of clothing named.
- 69-70 **all ... all ... all**: Note the tricolon* *toto ... toto ... tota* and the alliteration* of *pendebat perdita*. To add yet more emphasis the poet apostrophises Theseus.
- 71-5 Having shown the scene, the poet now begins to explain the background to it. The exclamation has no main verb, as the verbs are all in relative or temporal clauses.
- 71 **drove her mad**: *externavit* derives from *sterno* with the meaning 'drive out of the mind'.
- 72 **Erycina**: The 'lady of Eryx' is Venus who had a famous temple on Mt Eryx in Western Sicily, from where the cult spread to Rome: in Catullus' own day there was a temple of Venus Erycina in Rome itself. The metaphor* in *spinosas* ('thorny') is maintained by *serens* as we picture the goddess sowing thorns in the soil of Ariadne's heart.
- 73 **savage**: *ferox* is no insult at this stage – anybody who hopes to defeat the Minotaur needed to be so – but this man acts in the same way to his beloved as he did to his enemy.
- 74 **Piraeus**: the harbour of Athens. The rhythm of the ending of the line is again rough: a spondee and a strong caesura in the fifth-foot.
- 75 **Cretan**: Gortyn is in Crete, and the epithet comes to mean simply 'Cretan'. The proverbial injustice of King Minos was part of the Greek tradition (e.g. [Plato] *Minos* 318d-e) – and yet he ends up as the lawgiver in the Underworld. His wife Pasiphae fell in love and mated with a bull, conceiving the monstrous Minotaur which it was Theseus' purpose to kill. The epithet *iniusti* is perhaps more fitting in view of the human tax he demanded from Athens for the death of Androgeon, as explained next. *templa* is palaeographically more plausible as the correct reading behind the mss *tempta*: the word *templum* can simply mean an 'enclosure or building – hence palace' (Quinn), but it also strikes a nice oxymoron* with *iniusti*. Parthenius' emendation *tecta* loses this point.
- 76-79 **for ...** : this explains why Theseus was concerned with the Minotaur. *perhibent* again appeals to the tradition as witness (cf. 2n). Minos' son Androgeon was killed in Athens by rivals whom he had defeated at the Panathenaic Games; one version has it that he was killed by Theseus' own father Aegeus. Minos therefore besieged the city of Athens which held out quite successfully until it was beset by plague, when it submitted to terms. These terms were that the Athenians had to send seven young men and seven young women to the Minotaur in his labyrinth every year.
- 78-9 **chosen young men**: This recalls the phrase in line 4 describing the Argonauts. One wonders how these youths were 'chosen' – Vergil tells us the choice was by sortition (*Aeneid* 6.22). This and the following two lines all have fifth-foot spondees.
- Cecrops**: the legendary first king of Athens. Athens had got into the habit (*solitam esse*) of giving these people as 'dinner to the Minotaur' – the last few words conveying the stark truth in a brief compass.

- 80 **these evils:** Theseus' action is seen as heroic act of self-sacrifice seeking either death or glory. Of course, if his father Aegeus had been the one to kill Androgeon in the first place, then it would be only fitting that his son should go out to exact revenge. The battlements are *angusta* – a telling reminder that little Athens can not afford to lose its best youths.
- 82/3 **undead deaths:** *funera nec funera* is a paradox ('dead but not dead') especially in the manner of Greek literature (e.g. Euripides *Alcestis* 521, *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 512, *Phoenissae* 272, mocked by Aristophanes (*Acharnians* 396)).
- 84 **light ... gentle:** The fragility of Theseus' quest is well evoked by the syllepsis* of light craft and the gentle breezes which he was 'pressing on'.
- 85 **great-hearted:** Minos, having just been called the 'unjust king' is now given the epithet *magnanimus* – the Latin equivalent of Homer's *megaletor* (*Iliad* 13.302, used sardonically of the Trojans at 21.55) which combines the meanings 'great-hearted' and also 'haughty' as found here in the two separate words *magnanimus ... superbas*. At *Odyssey* 19.176 the epithet is applied to the Cretans by Odysseus (in a lying tale to his wife Penelope).
- 86 **saw ... eye:** As often in ancient literature, the eyes are the doorway of sexual desire: cf. Euripides *Hippolytus* 525-6 and especially Propertius 1.1.1 ('Cynthia first captivated lovesick me with her little eyes').
- 87ff **soft ... pure ... :** The royal maiden enjoys a life of luxury and safety in sharp contrast to the wild risk she takes for her lover. The poet almost implies that her naiveté was a by-product of her sheltered life up to that time, her virginity (*castus*) unprepared for the courting of Theseus, the long drawn-out childhood well evoked in the leisurely relative clause over four lines (*quam ... colores*) and being sharply terminated by her love at first sight.
- 87-8 **bed ... nurse:** Ariadne had a sweet-smelling bedroom symbolic of her innocence, as had the (much less innocent) Helen in Homer *Odyssey* 4.121. The bed does not literally 'feed' her of course, but the phrase conveys both her virginity and her growing to maturity. Understandably, the poet does not name Ariadne's infamous mother Pasiphae (see 75n) as that would ruin the atmosphere of innocence so artfully built up here.
- 89 **Eurotas:** the river that runs by Sparta: Catullus specifies this particular river presumably for some reason, but the only association the river has is with Helen of Troy (cf. Ovid *Amores* 1.10.1), hardly a rôle-model for marital fidelity.
- 90 **colours:** *colores* is here synecdochic* for 'flowers'.
- 91-3 **blazing ... flame ... :** Her eyes are 'burning' with love, leading to her whole body receiving the fire and then bursting into flames right down to the marrow of her bones. The tricolon* form of the image of love as fire is thus sustained as far as it can physically go in a hyperbolic* manner, assisted by the alliteration* and enjambment* of *cuncto concepit corpore flammam funditus*. Note here the ironic use of *concepit*; the only conception she received from Theseus was the fire of love: cf. 198-9n. Similarly, Peleus (19) and Bacchus (253) also catch fire with love.
- 94-5 **divine boy ... :** Apostrophe* of Cupid, complaining as does Apollonius of Rhodes 4.445 ('wicked boy, source of great pain, great hatred for men ... '). *misere* as often has the sense of 'love-sick' (Lucretius 4.1076 etc). Paradoxically

Love himself has a cruel heart in instilling these mad feelings (*furores* - on which see 54n) in others. The mixing of joys and sorrows is a common theme of divine providence; Venus does so at 68.18, and the twin jars of human fortune which Zeus dispenses to men allot their destined mixture of good and bad luck (Homer *Iliad* 24. 527-8)

96 **Golgi and Idalium** are both in Cyprus and famous as cult centres of Aphrodite/Venus.

97-8 **streams ... aflame:** A mixed metaphor* – Ariadne is 'aflame' but also being 'tossed on waves' of care.

Theseus is 'fair-haired' as Ariadne herself (63)

99 **fears:** Ariadne's fears are for Theseus as he faces the Minotaur. Note the assonance of *corde timores*.

100 **paler than ... gold:** 'Ariadne, an olive-skinned Mediterranean beauty, would naturally turn pale yellow (the colour of pure gold), rather than white, with fear.' (Quinn). There is also perhaps another oblique reference to the affluence of her upbringing.

102 **death or ... praise:** sounds like the rhetoric of warfare: 'either death or glory' is the typical heroic programme, and the enemy is here easily cast as a *saevum ... monstrum*.

103-4 **small gifts:** Ariadne made promises of offerings to the gods in return for Theseus' safety: these 'little gifts' (*munuscula* is an affectionate diminutive) were evidently not unpleasing to the gods – the juxtaposition of *ingrata ... frustra* stresses that. For details of the practice of making such *vota* see Ogilvie 37-9: such vows were often written down and attached to the statue of the god being invoked, whereas here Ariadne simply makes them secretly to herself 'with silent lip' (as her love for the stranger was of course disloyal to her father and her 'brother').

105-9 **just as ... :** An impressive simile* in the full epic manner, modelled on Apollonius Rhodius 4.1682-8 (and cf. Homer *Iliad* 13.389-93). The Taurus mountain range in Cilicia is chosen perhaps to suggest the word *taurus* (bull): the tree being laid out by the wind has anthropomorphic features – arms for branches (*braccia*) and sweating bark (*sudanti*) – to confirm the parallel with the Minotaur. We see the tree struggling for two lines before being shown what is destroying it, and the decisive verb *eruit* comes in the most emphatic position at the end of the phrase but the beginning of the line. The labour to uproot it is well conveyed in the fifth-foot spondee *exturbata*, while the twisting movement of the wind is stressed with the juxtaposition of *turbo contorquens*. The final scene of devastation is appropriate for a fallen tree but of course hyperbolic* in the context of a single combat between man and monster; but it adds to the drama and the magnitude of the scene.

110-11 **laid out:** Theseus' victory is despatched quickly after this impressive simile. The monster is laid out just as the tree *prona cadit*, the monster shakes its horns just as the tree shook its branches, with the extra piquancy that the powerful agent of destruction in the simile is now useless to assist – the *turbo* has become merely *vanis ... ventis* on whom the bull relies *nequiquam*.

- 113 **thread:** Ariadne helped him find his way out of the labyrinth by giving him a ball of thread which he simply rewound to retrace his path.
- 114-5 The Latin well evokes the labyrinthine journey, the few long words (9 words in two lines) suggesting the long journey, line 115 – with the one weak third-foot caesura – also connoting the unbroken set of paths for Theseus to wander. The language is also expressive: *tecti ... error* is a striking phrase – the whole construction is one giant 'wandering', but simple observation will not help (*inobservabilis*).
- 116-23 **Why ... more?:** A familiar rhetorical trope (*quid plura?*), justifying the tale and also skipping over areas of the tale which he does not wish to tell at length, and returning to Ariadne on Naxos.
- 117-8 **daughter ... father:** Ariadne's family bitterly regret her leaving – as does Ariadne herself now. Her father conspicuously fails to embrace her as do her sister and mother, whose grief is the greatest and the most fully explored – both the sister Phaedra and the mother Pasiphae being no strangers to dangerous love, of course; on Pasiphae see 75n, while Phaedra later on married Theseus and then fell disastrously in love with his son Hippolytus and took her life when he rejected her – as told in Euripides *Hippolytus* and Racine's *Phèdre*.
- 119 **grieved:** The mss simply read *leta* at the end of this line: most editors print Lachmann's *laetabatur*, reasoning that this expresses the mixture of emotions proper in a mother happy to see her daughter in love but sad to see her leave home. If correct, this is the one reference to happiness in the whole sentence, and Conington's *lamentata est* ('she grieved') is more likely to be correct.
- 120 **sweet:** *dulcis* is a common word in these poems, especially of happy love (cf. e.g. 66.6, 67.1, 68.106). Again, there is an ambiguity about the genitive *Thesei*: if objective it is accurate (she did love him), if subjective, it is merely wishful thinking. (cf. 19n).
- 121-3 **departed ... sleep:** The enormity of Theseus' crime is well expressed: he did not even tell her her fate but waited until she was 'tied up in sleep' and stole away. *immemori* means more than that he forgot to take her with him, but has the sense of 'deliberately neglectful' and is a *Leitmotif* of this whole section of the poem (see 58, 231, 248). *coniunx* is deliberately left to the end as the crowning insult.
- 124-31 The narrative returns to Ariadne on the beach, picking up the tale from 75. Ariadne's first instinct is to climb the steep cliffs to keep Theseus' ship in view (126-7), then when it has vanished over the horizon, to run into the water after it (128), but no longer so self-forgetful as she was at 63-9, as she now lifts her dress clear of the water.
- 124 **they say:** *perhibent* is another reference to the legendary tradition – irony as this is part of the tale-telling itself. Notice the hyperbole* of *ardenti ... furentem* and then *imo e pectore*.
- 125 **piercing:** *clarisonas* (cf. 320) is ironic as her words, however, eloquent and clear, cannot be heard by their addressee.
- 126 **mountains ... gaze:** she climbs up to a vantage point to keep Theseus' ship in view for as long as possible, but the object of her vision is almost all sea rather than ship, as is shown in 127 *pelagi vastos aestus*.

- 128 **trembling:** *tremuli* is elsewhere used of people: 61.51 *tremulus parens*, 17.13 *tremula patris in ulna*, 68.142 *corpus tremulum* of old age, as of the Parcae at 307. The reader might expect it here to apply to Ariadne shaking with anger/fear: it in fact goes with *salis* used in metonymy* for the sea which moves in a regular up-and-down manner.
- 129 **bared:** the poet shows a flash of bare flesh again, but unlike the earlier occasion she is now conscious of the water and lifts her skirt up to avoid getting it wet – contrast 66-8 (Quinn). *nudatae* sounds enticing and recollects the loss of clothing of 63-7, but will only reveal the ... *surae* (the calf of the leg).
- 130 **sad:** *maestam*: cf. *tristem* (126). *extremis* is rather premature as she is not actually going to die (cf. 76. 18). Quinn explains: 'i.e. her last words as a mortal; when her lament is over she is rescued by Dionysus (see 251-3); there is an echo in Propertius 3.7.55'. It is thus an example of dramatic irony, the reader knowing more than the character and the 'narrator' at this point.
- 131 **icy little:** *frigidulos* is a pathetic diminutive (cf. 103, 3.18): the sobbing of *singultus* combined with the detail of her wet face is perhaps chilly because of the effects of wind and water together.

132-201 Ariadne's lament: the 'longest section of the poem' (Quinn), and of course having no possible source in the tapestry being described. There is a similarity between this speech and the soliloquy of the abandoned Palaestra in Plautus' *Rudens* 185ff, a similarity at least of rhetoric: as in the dramatic context there is also irony here. For a character to proclaim that she is all alone when she is in front of an audience there is what Laird calls 'meta-theatrical irony' (Laird (1993) 28): similarly, for a figure in a picture which is being avidly gazed at by the youth of Thessaly (267) to lament being alone, and to be described as uttering a plangent lament to that effect, is irony raised to a higher power. The context and some of the detail of her lament is familiar to us already from the previous narrative, but the rhetoric allows the poet to do several things: firstly, to repeat and reinforce the abandonment of Ariadne; secondly, to expand our vision of the narrative with events in the past (e.g. Theseus' promise of marriage (139-41) and Ariadne's leaving home (180-3)) and the future (e.g. her being eaten by wild beasts (152-3)) as well as alternative scenarios of what could have been (160-3); thirdly to draw attention to the contrast between the visual/spatial and the narrative/temporal in this *ecphrasis*. Earlier the poet has animated the picture into a sequence of movement (126-30) as he will later animate the picture into a sequence of sounds (251-64): here he freezes the picture into a static position but animates the emotions and brings out the energy and passion locked in a static imprisoned form.

- 132-4 **traitor ...** : the epanalepsis* of *perfide*, combined with the stress on divine powers (*aris ... neglecto numine divum*) allies Ariadne and the gods who uphold oaths against the 'traitor'. Ariadne has been 'abducted' from her ancestral altars and Theseus has neglected the power of the gods – all pointing towards her rescue at the hands of a god.
- 134 **is this ... is this:** repetition of *sicine* from 132
- 135 **carry home:** *portas* he carries a freight ... of broken promises. *devota* here means 'under curse'.

The point here is that his ship ought to carry Ariadne, but all it bears is the weight of broken promises and curses resulting from her abandonment. Note the high emotional use of *a!*.

- 136 **turning ... mind:** 'Turning the mind of ...' usually refers to men praying to gods, but is here used of Ariadne beseeching Theseus in vain. Note the enjambement* of 136-7. The catalogue of complaints builds up from *perfide ... immemor ... crudelis ... inmite*, this last having recently been used of Cupid (94). The sardonic tone is here evident: 'you had no *clementia* available at the time so as perhaps to be prepared to consider (*vellet*) taking pity on me ...' She speaks with sarcasm, as if what she was asking was a favour when in fact it was his duty.
- 139-41 **These were not ... :** contrasts the past, Theseus' promises and flattering tone (*blanda voce*) with the grim reality of the present. The promises were freely given (*dedisti*), not wrung from him reluctantly.
- 140 **love-sick:** *miserae* referring to Ariadne. Then she was *miser* in the sense of love-sick (as in Lucretius 4. 1076 etc); now she is *miser* in every sense of the word. *iubebas* is a strong word – you forced me to hope, almost against my will. 'Then you gave me happiness, ordering me to hope, now you have stolen my happiness and ordered my death.'
- 140-1 **love-sick ... joyful:** The *miserae* is contrasted with *laeta ... optatos*. The collocation of *conubia ... hymenaeos* is imitated in Vergil *Aen* 4.316. Note the chiasmus here and the lack of a strong caesura; there is no coincidence of ictus and accent in foot 5. 'The line can be read as a combination of a glyconic and a pherecratean, the metre used for wedding songs (cf. poem 61), to which this is a pathetic allusion' (Goold)
- 142 **winds ... nothing:** cf. 59, Vergil *Aeneid* 9.313. This line is a perfect summary of Ariadne's futile despair, leading into a generalised jeremiad against man's selfish cupidity.
- 143 **From now on ... :** Partly in contrast to an assumed 'in the old days' (for which see 384-407): no longer will there be any trusting men. This leads to the assumption that Thetis ought not to trust Peleus, as they are clearly posterior to the events on the coverlet – despite the idyllic words used of their love earlier. No men can be trusted, she says.
- Note also the jingle of *nunc iam nulla viro*, the repetition of *nulla* and *viro/i; iuranti* picks up the oath theme of *periuria* (135). The words form the neat scheme of man swearing, woman believing, with the sentence ending up with the sad word *fideles*; *speret* picks up 140 *sperare iubebas*.
- 145-7 **lustful ... making:** Men, says Ariadne, will say anything to get what they want, and then will ignore their words once their desire has been satisfied. NB the vagueness of *aliquid* is redeemed by *cupiens* and it is their *animus* (the Greek *thymos*), the appetitive side of the mind, which is anticipating (*prae-*) the acquisition (*apisci*), a word often used of acquiring property.
- 146 **nothing ... no ... :** Note here the rhetorical repetition of *nil ... nihil*, and the chiasmus* of verb+infinitive followed by infinitive+verb.
- 147 **once ... slaked:** Catullus seems to be using the language of Lucretius 4, but is interestingly different. Lucretius argues that sex is futile because 'as soon as it is all over there is a brief respite and then it is back to square one' (Lucretius 4.

- 1115ff); Ariadne feels that the sexual bond between them has been a mere pretence to secure the ulterior motive of slaying the beast. *cupidae* picks up *cupiens* from 145.
- 148 **fear:** *metuere* is suspect as a gnomic perfect alongside the present tense *curant*. Czwalina's *meminere* (1867), adopted by Goold and Quinn, removes the problems, but is not compelling.
- 149-50 **I saved you:** Ariadne expected Theseus to love her for what she had done for him, but her reward is desertion without even the honour of burial. The phrase 'in the middle of the eddy of death' is striking, reminding us of the *turbo* which was compared to Theseus in the simile* at 105-9; *medius* is an intensive word here. Note also the enjambement*.
- 150 **brother:** her brother is the Minotaur, the half-brother offspring of her mother Pasiphae and the bull. *crevi* is legal language. It may seem odd of Ariadne to affect any great affection for the Minotaur – she brings him in here firstly as a desperate emotional argument (I gave up my brother for you as well as my home and my future ...) and secondly as it focusses on the theme of human (or half-human) sacrifice as elsewhere in the poem (especially 362-70): thirdly, it points a contrast and comparison between Minotaur and Theseus. Who is the monster now?
- 151 **cheat:** *fallaci* a word last used of the sleep which 'deceived' her in 56.
- 152-3 **given ... to wild beasts:** A familiar terror in the ancient world is that of the unburied dead lacking peace in the underworld: both the fear of the soul wandering eternally and the horror of the corpse being eaten by birds and animals; cf. Homer *Iliad* 1.4-5, Sophocles *Antigone*, Lucretius 3. 888-93.
- 152-3 **torn apart ... dead:** notice the chiasitic* *dilaceranda feris – alitibusque praeda*, the enjambement* and the impressive five-syllable word with which 152 ends.
- 154 **lonely:** cf. 60.1-3.
- 155 **sea ... :** is not mere rhetoric, but is appropriate to her position on the sea shore. *conceptum ... exspuit* might suggest abortion or miscarriage: it implies rejection of the child (cf. Lucr. 2.1041). The literary source for this passage is Patroclus' rebuke of Achilles in Homer *Iliad* 16.33-5: 'Pitiless man, your father was not Peleus, nor was Thetis your mother, but the grey sea gave you birth, and the steep cliffs, for your heart will not bend.'
- 156 **Syrtes ... Scylla ... Charybdis:** An impressive tricolon crescendo*. The Syrtes are the shallows off the African coast; Scylla was loved by Poseidon and turned by her rival Amphitrite (see 11n.) into a sea-monster who devoured sailors who sailed near her cave; Charybdis is the whirlpool off the coast of Sicily, a peril faced successfully by Jason and the Argonauts. The sense of *vasta* is "the emptiness or desolation which repels or appals the beholder" (Fordyce)
- 157 **returns ... sweet life:** all the positive words are strung together: *dulci praemia vita*.
- 158 **if your heart ... :** i.e. your heart had never been in our marriage, because of your father's orders. 'Aegeus was ... one of the old school (*prisci*, cf. Hor *Odes* 3.21.11 *prisci Catonis*) who had strong ideas (*saeva praecepta*) about their sons and foreign women' (Quinn). Ariadne is perhaps saying that Theseus was less

honest than his father, who never concealed or disguised his feelings about a 'foreign wife'. The irony here is that this tapestry is covered with *priscis* ... *figuris* (50) but among them is someone harking back even further to men who are even more *prisci*.

161 **slave ... love:** Ariadne would have preferred the life of a slave to no contact at all with Theseus – she would even enjoy it (*iucundo*) – unless, that is, *iucundo* means 'pleasant for you' and she is thus saying that Theseus would enjoy it. Note the concentration of *famularer serva labore*, all words of service.

162 **soothing ... waters:** a lovely line for an unappealing act. *permulceo* is 'I soothe, pacify, alleviate'. He has beautiful feet (*candida*). It is not obvious why the poet calls the water *liquidis*: it may be stressing the liquid element as Ariadne is on the sea-shore. Note also that this picture is not actually part of the coverlet but is simply in Ariadne's mind as she speaks, and yet the 'colour' words are still there and the scene is painted as if it were being described from sight. *vestigia* for feet by metonymy* – this is the first use of this (Fordyce).

163 **garment of crimson:** A nice ironic touch, the coverlet prompting a tale where a coverlet is imagined – and it is purple also as at 47-9.

164-70 **But why ... ?:** Ariadne pulls herself together and reminds herself that she is alone and unheard. This may be a naturalistic device, or else a gentle mockery of the tragic address to sun, moon, earth etc (as in e.g. Sophocles' *Ajax* 856-865)

164 **in vain:** Another reference to the theme of futility; note the juxtaposition of *ignaris nequiquam* and cf. 111.

165 **out of my mind:** for *externo* cf. 71. There may be a Lucretian echo in *nullis sensibus auctae* – cf. Lucretius 3. 630, mocking the artists (among others) who have depicted the soul as endowed with physical senses.

166 **cannot hear ... :** The line contains further echoes of Lucretius: (3.931-2 (Nature speaking) and 4.577 (echoes)). Catullus' purpose in this imitation is debatable; possibly to mock Lucretian rationalism, or again simply the incongruity of this highly disturbed woman's using the language of Epicurean *ataraxia** (serenity) to try to calm herself down. The reminder of the echo is especially apt in the *loca deserta* setting of this speech: and poignantly Lucretius describes (4. 575-6) being 'with companions' but she has none (168). There is also a nice irony in Ariadne 'complaining that she cannot be heard or addressed because she is in a picture'. (Laird 29)

167-8 **By now ... :** Ariadne imagines how by now he is in the middle of the sea whereas she has gone nowhere and is alone. Notice the sandwiching of the (non-existent) man in the middle of *vacua* ... *in alga* and the gritty detail of seaweed rather than the poetic sandy shore.

mortalis looks forward to the god Bacchus who is going to arrive any minute: it is again dramatic irony in her mouth.

169-70 **spiteful ... exsultant:** This is a personification of fate: but the reader thinks that *nimis insultans* etc must refer to Theseus, until the feminine ending on *saeva*. There is surely a wry joke in the play on *auris* as breezes/ears: I have no *aures* (ears) but only *aurae* (breezes) to hear me! *nimis* is unusual – more even than is normal for fate?

- 171 **Almighty Jupiter:** Ariadne, deprived of human audience, directs her apostrophe to Jupiter. The form of the wish is well-known from Eur *Medea* 1ff, Ennius *Medea* 253-4.
- 172 Notice how the juxtaposition of the place-names forms a 'golden line*'. *tempore primo* is clearly (and chiastically*) opposed to *extremo tempore* in 169.
Even in her distress, Ariadne can still speak with a learned allusive style of Cnossian (for Cretan), Cecropian (for Athenian). Even more striking is the string of understatements: if only just the *poops* of *Cecrops* had not even *touched* the *shore* of *Cnossos* ... This suggests that her fate was sealed by this tiny act, the bomb detonated by a spark.
- 173 **dreadful ... bull:** almost a golden line*, with the unpleasant words together at the front and the adjectives and nouns in chiasmic* formation.
- 174 For *perfidus* cf. 132-3; Theseus is now just a sailor, and a treacherous one at that.
- 175 **wicked ... guest:** The *perfidus ... navita* is now (variation) a *malus hospes*, the cruelty of his plans hidden inside the phrase *dulci ... forma*. The word *hospes* is sardonic – to think we invited him in and looked after him ... and note the enjambement* of 175-6
- 177-87 Ariadne is trapped, as are many characters in epic and tragedy – most closely comparable being perhaps Philoctetes (abandoned on the island of Lemnos by the treacherous Greeks, a fate similar to Ariadne's) and Daedalus and Icarus who seek to escape from King Minos (Ariadne's father) by flying.
- 178 **Ida:** Mount Ida is in her native Crete.
- 178/9 **rough:** *truculentum* ('angry' or 'stormy') is a nice touch of pathetic fallacy*: as if the sea were cross in thwarting her homecoming.
- 180-1 **my brother's blood:** The sentiments are rhetorically pleasing, but less than fully reasonable. One wonders how much affection her father bore for the monster born of his wife's bestiality, whom he locked in the labyrinth. The theme of brotherly slaughter is picked up again at 399 in Catullus' moralising epilogue, where the poet laments that 'modern society' is barbaric enough to commit such acts – which the heroic age also committed. The image of being spattered with blood is gruesome and effective.
- 182 **faithful ... husband:** Ariadne's words are sardonic again – her 'faithful husband' is now fleeing from her. *memet* is perhaps self-pitying – 'everyone else has a husband (and father, and family) but not me ... '
- 183 **bending his pliant oars:** The rower bends over the oars, straining to go faster: if the word *lentos* means 'sluggish' then we have the sense of Theseus' impatience, whereas if the word means rather 'pliant, flexible' it suggests then that the rower is applying such force to the oars that they are bending. Ariadne imagines that Theseus is rowing his own ship.
- 184-7 Ariadne's despair finds its expression in two series of anaphoras*: *nullo ... nulla, ... nulla* and then *omnia ... omnia ... omnia*, the latter being an obvious tricolon crescendo*.
- 184 The mss reading *litus* is awkward: it demands to be taken in apposition with *sola insula* and is only perhaps to be explained as the inelegant expression of a

distraught woman. More likely is Palmer's *colitur* – palaeographically easy to corrupt to the shorter *litus* and supplying the missing verb.

186 The final syllable of *nulla* is scanned long by position before the double consonant which begins *spes*.

186-7 **all is silent:** Ariadne's words are ironic in view of what we know is coming to her; far from being 'silent' (*muta*) Bacchus and his entourage make a terrific din (254-264), nor is the island *deserta* once the troupe of bacchantes will have arrived, and Ariadne will wed a god and thus be an immortal when Theseus is merely a dead hero.

188-91 **demand ... punishment:** Ariadne announces her intention to appeal to the gods and secure vengeance for her ill-treatment. Her need for revenge is no less because she will as it happens be saved by Bacchus – his rescue is motivated by sheer desire, not by any wish to see justice done, and anyway Theseus has still done wrong even if the tale ends happily.

188-9 **droop ... withdraw:** *letum* ends the previous sentence: Ariadne expresses fatigue (*languescit ... fesso*) but rouses herself now to state that she will not die until she has secured vengeance. Death is expressed in two images: the eyes drooping and the senses withdrawing from the body, the second of which is evocative of Lucretius' view of the *anima* as linking the senses together in what we would call the nervous system, whereby sleep is a temporary, and death a permanent, disconnection of the channels of sensation.

190 **punishment:** A *multa* was strictly speaking a fine – ironic understatement here in a highly rhetorical passage to use so pedestrian a word.

191 **faith of the heavenly ones:** Ariadne clearly trusts in the justice of the gods – if only because she has nobody left to turn to.

192 **Kindly Ones:** the Erinyes who punished murder – especially murder of kinsfolk as in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. They also punish perjury (Homer *Iliad* 19. 259-60, Hesiod *Works and Days* 803-4). For the image of them having snakes entwined in their hair see e.g. Aeschylus *Choephoroi* 1049 and also Sophocles *Ajax* 835-40. *multantes* picks up *multa* from 190, and the three words *multantes vindice poena* add up to a devastating amount of vengeance.

194 **anger:** The poet uses a lively image of them hissing out their anger (*exspirantis etc*) and spitting their venom with the alliteration* of the letter p.

195-7 The level of rhetoric is high: repetition of *huc huc*, emotion of *vae misera* and the impressive four-adjective catalogue *inops ardens amenti caeca* sandwiched by the basic phrase *cogor ... furore*: note also the tricolon crescendo* of 1. *inops* 2. *ardens* 3. *amenti caeca furore*.

198-9 **sincerely:** Ariadne implies that insincere feelings deserve to be ignored, but hers are too genuine to be insignificant. The source of her feelings is *extremis ... medullis* (196) and here *pectore ab imo*, just as at 93 and 125. Note again the bitter irony that the cares 'are born' (*nascuntur*) continuing the theme of the sterility of Ariadne's 'marriage'.

202-14 Bridge passage linking this speech with that of Aegeus.

203 A neat symmetrical line: noun A – adjective B – verb – adjective A – noun B.

- 204 **ruler ... nod:** Ariadne's faith in the gods is justified in the event: Jupiter here nods assent, and later on Bacchus rescues her. The source of Jupiter's earth-shaking nod is Homer *Iliad* 1.528-30 ('The son of Cronos (Zeus) spoke, and nodded his dark brow in agreement, and the ambrosial locks waved from the immortal head of the king; and he made great Olympus shake'): here the use of the word *numen* suggests its origin in the word *nuo* – the collocation amounting to a *figura etymologica**. *caelestum rector* is an epic epithet to describe Jupiter.
- 205-6 **earth ... sea ... firmament:** The three spheres of earth, sea and sky (represented by the three divine sons of Rhea: Pluto/Hades, Neptune/Poseidon and Jupiter/Zeus respectively) all shake at the nod, the phrase being ideal for the tricolon crescendo* which climaxes with Jupiter's own sphere of the heavens. *horrida* is predicative in expressing the effect of the nod.
- 207-8 **planted:** Theseus was 'sown with unseeing darkness as to his mind'.
- 209 **instructions:** The word *mandata* is repeated at 214 and 232 'as a kind of *Leitmotif* (Quinn). The phrase recalls Lucretius 2.582 *memori mandatum mente tenere* ('to hold the instruction in an unforgetting mind').
- 210 **welcome ... sad:** The juxtaposition of *dulcia ... maesto* is deliberate, the white sails would indeed have been 'sweet' to the 'sad' parent: the tale is here sketched in rough outline, to be elaborated in greater detail below.
- 211 **Athens:** Erectheus was the great-grandfather of Aegeus, and so Erecthean means 'Athenian'.
- 212 **they say:** *ferunt olim* is an appeal to the legend as at 2, 76, 124 etc.
- 215-37 Aegeus' farewell, couched in two long sentences composed in difficult syntax and awkward structure, suggestive perhaps of 'an old man's rambling way of speaking' (Quinn).
- 215-6 **son ... son:** The father repeats the word in emphatic anaphora*. The son is choosing to go off to Crete (81-2), and so the only compulsion the old man is under is that of the will of his son and his fate (218), forced to *dimittere* his son who then *dimisit* his father's instructions (208)
- 217 **just recently:** Theseus' father Aegeus did not meet his son until the latter was grown up and had made the journey to Athens to meet him; Theseus grew up with his mother Aethra in Troezen. *reddite* is the perfect word to denote the giving back of a child to its rightful father.
- 218 **boiling:** *fervida* is 'boiling' or 'blazing', often used of anger and passion, as in describing Aeneas as *fervidus ira* ('boiling with rage') at the end of the Vergil's *Aeneid*.
- 219 **you ... me:** again, emphatic juxtaposition of *mihi te*, with *cui* therefore ambiguous until the phrase unfolds in full. The sense of *languida* is that of eyes 'drooping' in sleep or death – reminding us of Ariadne's words at 188, whereas the sense of *saturata* is clearly 'feasted full'; the old man uses the language of the banqueter who will sleep easily after feasting – ironically here as he is anything but happy and the dreadful feast in question is one of human flesh to a Minotaur.
- 221 **rejoicing ... glad:** The old man makes the almost tautologous remark *gaudens laetanti pectore* to stress to his son that he views the enterprise with no

- pleasure, a feeling evinced by the colour of the dark sails which he will instruct his son to fly on the mast.
- 222 **ensigns of good fortune:** these would perhaps be tempting fate and so the old man counsels the opposite.
- 223 **laments:** 'A note of distancing irony' (Quinn); cf. 164-70. The lamentation is of course premature, even if it is justified in the event.
- 224 **defiling ... dust:** defiling the head with earth and dust is a gesture of grief, as performed by Achilles over the dead Patroclus (Homer *Iliad* 18. 23-25), Priam over his dead son Hector (Homer *Iliad* 24. 163-5) and later Evander over his dead son Pallas (Vergil *Aeneid* 10.844).
- 227 **Iberian purple:** 'Spanish rust' is the colour, not of fresh rust, but rather 'the deep blue colour of heavily weathered iron' (Quinn). The term reminds us of the rusting farm implements neglected while the rural folk attend the wedding in line 42. Hector
- 228 **Itonus:** a town in Thessaly with a famous sanctuary of Athena.
- 230 **spatter ... blood:** the phrasing recalls 181 where Ariadne describes Theseus as 'a young man spattered with my brother's blood', a theme picked up again at 399.
- 231 **unforgetting:** *memor* and its opposite *immemor* are the terms by which Theseus is constantly tried and found wanting: cf. 58, 248.
- 232 **blot out:** *oblittero* means the defacing of an inscription by the passage of time and the effects of the elements; Aegeus wishes his words to be 'engraved' and not to be 'worn away' with time.
- 234-5 **cloth of death:** the sails are *funestam* both because they (falsely) betoken the death of Theseus and also because they (truly) bring about the death of Aegeus. For the word cf. 201, 246. There is a neat contrast and parallelism in these lines, as *funestam* is placed at the beginning of one line, *candida* at the beginning of the other, and likewise the two antonymic verbs are placed midway in their respective lines. *undique* adds emphasis – 'all the sails' (Quinn) The ropes are 'twisted' because they are made from plaited threads and rushes.
- 236 **joys ... glad:** *laeta gaudia* are juxtaposed for emphasis. *aetas prospera* is perhaps an odd phrase to use, suggestive of the several 'ages' of man: it would be easier to emend it to Dousa's *fors*, but this would lose the theme of age and time which Aegeus stresses throughout his speech.
- 239-40 **as clouds ... :** An epic simile*, Theseus being the lofty mountain who forgets his instructions just as the clouds fly away from the mountain-top when blown by the wind. The 'source' of the simile is perhaps Homer *Iliad* 5. 522-6. Not all the features of the simile are equally important, of course; the mountain-top is 'snowy white' and 'lofty' simply to add atmosphere and panoramic scale, rather than for any symbolic reason.
- 241 **from the top ... :** The father gazes out (naturally enough) from a high vantage-point to see Theseus sailing towards him, just as in similar fashion Ariadne sought a high vantage-point from which to gaze at Theseus sailing away from her (126-7). Here Aegeus' desperation is well brought-out as he 'sought' a 'glimpse' from the 'very top' of the citadel.

- 242 A line of great artistry, almost a golden line* in its word-order and employing a pleasing degree of assonance*: *anxia in assiduos absumens lumina fletus*. The pathos of the poetic conceit that the old man is 'wearing out' his anxious eyes simply by looking too much and too hard is also striking.
- 243 **billowing:** The reading of V is *inflati*, a word which makes perfect sense ('billowing' in the wind) but which, it was felt by many editors, fails to explain the event in the way which Sabellicus' *infecti* ('stained') does. Catullus, it might be argued, has already explained the situation thoroughly, and the billowing of the sail would bring it to the old man's attention more quickly. The mss reading is a nice piece of understated realism.

246-50 Catullus ends this part of the *ecphrasis* with verbal echoes recalling the beginning of the episode: central themes of the episode are run through quickly once again, unravelling the story much as Theseus unravelled the thread in the labyrinth. *funesta ... paterna* refers to the latest incident described (i.e. the death of his father Aegeus); *morte ferox* reminds us of the killing of the Minotaur (73-4, 105-111) – suggested also by the term *Minoidi* to describe Ariadne; finally we see the picture with which the scene began (52ff) of Ariadne sad on the seashore. The correlative *qualem ... talem* reminds us of Ariadne's curse *quali ... tali* (200-201), and the sentence ends with an appropriately maritime metaphor* for the many-layered rolling waves of care inside her, recalling the early description of her in line 54. Individual words add to this 'ring-composition' effect: *immemori* in 248 looks back to *immemor* in 58, *prospectans* in 249 picks up *prospectans* in 52, *cedentem* (249 – 53) *maesta* (249) picking up *maestis* in 60.

251-264 While Ariadne is gazing out to sea, behind her the god Dionysus/Bacchus is coming towards her with his retinue, about to save her; a form of dramatic irony whereby we know more than the character in the story.

- 251 **Iacchus:** a form of the name of the Greek god Dionysus, often termed Bacchus or Liber in Latin. This mysterious god was himself the child of Zeus/Jupiter and a mortal woman Semele, brought up by the nymphs of Mount Nysa after his father's self-revelation had incinerated his mother still carrying him. The worship of this god was carried out especially by women (Maenads, Thyiads, Bacchantes) who would take to the mountains and there practise forms of ecstatic religious rites involving the killing and eating of wild animals. The males who also attended the god were grotesque – both the young Satyrs (goat-like creatures in a permanent state of sexual arousal) and the old Sileni (usually drunk). Dionysus was also the god of the theatre and his worship is best examined in Euripides' tragedy *The Bacchae*, a play which may be the source for some of Catullus' phrases here.

flowery ... flying: *florens volitabat* is a striking pair of metaphors: flowering and flying at one and the same time.

- 252 **Satyrs ... Sileni:** see 251n. The *thiasus* is a Greek word for the company of Dionysiac worshippers, used also of the frenzied band of Cybele's worshippers at 63.28. Nysa was traditionally seen as the source of Dionysus and his cult; opinions varied as to its geographical location – Thrace, Arabia, Ethiopia and India all being contenders.

- 253 **for you ...** : Catullus again addresses a character directly in apostrophe*; cf. 22-30 and 69.
- 254-5 **raging ... distracted**: The phrase *lymphata mente furebant* emphasises the madness and frenzy of the Maenads, as does the repeated *euhoe* interrupting the sentence. 'tossing their heads' refers to the familiar spectacle (in Art) of the Bacchantes 'in ecstasy flinging back the head in the dewy air' (Euripides' *Bacchae* 864-5)
- 256 **bacchic wands**: The *thyrsus* was a stick or staff tipped with vine-leaves or ivy: its touch was enough to induce frenzy.
- 257 **torn apart**: Another familiar aspect of Dionysiac ritual, the *sparagmos* or tearing asunder of an animal: the most notorious *sparagmos* was that in which the mother and aunts of King Pentheus tore him limb from limb thinking that he was a lion, as Dionysus' punishment for Pentheus' spurning of his rites in Thebes – the tale told in Euripides' *Bacchae*. The deliberate postponement of the noun *iuvenco* here may lead the reader to wonder exactly who or what is being dismembered. The poet dwells on the savaging of these rites in a manner which might lead us to wonder just how happy Ariadne's union with the god is destined to be.
- 258 **snakes**: Bacchantes were able to take venomous snakes into their hands without suffering harm, even being able (as here) to 'bind their speckled hide-garments with snakes which licked their cheeks' (Euripides' *Bacchae* 697-8).
- 259 **ritual objects**: *orgia* denotes both the rites themselves and here the secret exotic (*obscura*) cult-objects contained in the wicker-baskets (*cistis*). The same word *orgia* is repeated in epanalepsis* in 260, where its meaning is more general 'rites' rather than the specific 'cult-objects'. *audire* is a difficult word in either case; if it means simply 'hear', then we imagine the uninitiated striving in vain to catch the cries of worshippers and *orgia* means 'rites', whereas if *orgia* means 'cult-objects' again the verb would have to mean 'hear about' (OLD s.v.9).
- 261-4 **drums ... cymbals ... horns ... pipe**: The sound of the Dionysiac worship is described in some detail – although of course sounds cannot be portrayed in two-dimensional art such as the tapestry which Catullus purports to be describing. The whole passage is rich in sound-effects: the alliteration* of (c.g.) *plangebant ... proceris tympana palmis/ ... tereti tenuis tinnitus*, the assonance* of *raucisonos ... cornua bombos*.
- 261-2 **drums**: The *tympanum* was more like a modern tambourine than a drum, consisting as it did of hide stretched over one side of a wooden hoop, with tiny pairs of cymbals attached to the side of the hoop; the two actions in these lines are both performed with the same instrument, depending on whether it is to be beaten or shaken.
- 263-4 **horns ... pipe**: From percussion to wind: the horn produces the low booming *bombus* while the *tibia* (a reed instrument) emits a more blaring high-pitched sound well evoked by the adjective *horribili*, the verb *stridebat* (a screeching sound) and the *i* assonance of the two together. The whole passage appears to be a conflation of two passages in Lucretius: 'a thunder of drums (*tympana*) attends her, tight-stretched and pounded by palms, and a clash of hollow cymbals; hoarse-throated (*raucisono*) horns (*cornua*) bray their deep warning, and the hollow pipe

thrills (*tibia*) every heart with Phrygian strains' (2.618-20) and then also: 'when the trumpet lows with a deep bass boom, and the boxwood pipe, the virtuoso foreign instrument, re-echoes its hoarse roar ...' (4.545-6: for the reading *buxus cita* see my commentary *ad loc*).

265-303 The *ecphrasis* has ended and we are put back into the original context of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis. There now follows a procession of divine guests coming to the wedding-feast: a procession marked by discord (Prometheus still bearing the scars of his quarrel with Jupiter) and pointed absences (Apollo and Diana). These three divine beings are named when the other major gods are not, giving the impression that the poet is lingering on the discordant element: but the contrast is surely drawn therefore between quarrelsome and spiteful gods on the one hand and a supremely harmonious couple on the other.

267-77 The human guests depart from the palace, politely leaving before the gods arrive in a spirit (presumably) of deference; this sits oddly with the poet's insistence that in the heroic age the gods mingled freely with men.

267-8 **satisfied:** The youth of Thessaly was 'filled up' with looking, a metaphor* to express the sensuous enjoyment of the wedding and the palace whose mere sight was enough to satisfy the appetite: this is in sharp contrast to Lucretius' barbed jibe at lovers who 'cannot sate themselves with looking' and 'neither can they remove any part from the delicate limbs by rubbing them with their hands ...' (4.1102-3).

269-75 **just as ... :** A beautiful simile* comparing the departing guests to the waves ruffled into increasing movement by the West wind towards the rising sun. The simile is based on Homer *Iliad* 4. 422-5: 'just as when on the much-sounding shore the swelling wave of the sea rises up more swiftly under the moving power of Zephyr: out on the sea it forms a crest first of all, and then breaks on the land roaring greatly ...'

269-70 **breath ... forwards:** The word *flatu* is placed early, then the sea is seen in its calmness in the morning, the new line starting off with the expressive *horrificans* which produces sudden motion (*proclivas incitat undas*) which looks like that of a stream flowing downhill (*proclivus* is thus used at Lucretius 6. 728) although the sea is flat.

271 **forwards ... to the ... sun:** Quinn notes that 'the waves move ... out of darkness into light, like the crowd'. The phrasing of this line is 'high' poetic style in the extreme, with the striking metaphor* *vagi sub limina solis*.

272-3 **slowly at first:** The waves take time to accumulate motion and so move slowly at first; the crowd, by contrast, are lingering because they are reluctant to leave, but the phrase *clementi flamine pulsae* suggests that the driving force of the gods is benevolent, just as the mood of the crowd is happy and laughing (*cachinni*).

275 **crimson ... reflect:** The crimson light of the rising sun is reflected in the water, the distance between the waves and the light being expressed in the separation of *purpurea ... luce*. Note here also the poetic conceit of waves 'swimming' or 'floating' on the sea.

- 276 **the royal household ... forecourt:** The opulence of the house is stressed once again as three words are used to denote it. The emphasis on the word *vestibuli* causes concern: why should the poet pick out the portal? One possibility is that the word is put in to match the metaphorical *limina solis* of 271, as suggested by Fraenkel's note on Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1180ff: Nisbet notes this ((Nisbet (1995) 388) but then conjectures that the correct reading might be *vestiflui* 'with flowing robes', which would be wonderful in the context of the simile if it could be supported with more textual evidence: it would 'point back to the flowing water of the simile' and bring the texture of the simile into the narrative proper.
- 277 **all departed:** The breaking up of the crowd is well brought out by the short words and the broken rhythm of the line, the fifth-foot spondee suggestive of the slow movement.
- 278-302 The gods arrive and bring gifts.
- 279 **Chiron** was the wise centaur 'from the cave on Mt Pelion' (Homer *Iliad* 16.144) who later became the tutor of the young Achilles. Here he brings 'gifts of the woodland' which are then explained as coming from all over Thessaly and not solely from woodland.
- 280-2 **flowers:** The poet delays the noun *flores* leaving the reader in suspense as to what he is talking about. 'Instead of a list of places where the flowers came from, the reader is offered a series of images of Thessaly, its fields and mountains, the river Peneus, and left free to explore these; the strictly denotative word *flores* necessarily inhibits this process, so it is delayed as long as possible.' (Quinn).
- 281/2 **the river:** the Peneus, the main river in Thessaly
- 282 **Favonius** is the West Wind or Zephyr. The line is similar in wording and feeling to Lucretius 1.11 'in all its force the fertilising breeze of the West wind is unlocked', both of them perhaps remembering Callimachus Hymn 2.80-1 ('your altars wear flowers in spring – all the flowers which the Hours bring out in their different colours when Zephyrus breathes dew.') In all three cases the West wind is described as a wind producing fertility. The mss reading *perit* is clearly wrong, and Housman's lovely *aperit* (the breeze 'opening up' the flowers) is far preferable to *parit* adopted by most editors.
- 283 **mingled:** Quinn asks interestingly whether the poet wrote *in distinctis* ('in separate') rather than *indistinctis* ('in unsorted'); unfortunately word-division is not part of the paradox of a Latin text and so the editor must decide which reading makes the more sense. Most feel that Chiron had gathered such a plethora of flowers that the effect of this plenty would be lessened if they were few enough to be sorted into separate bunches, and so the 'unsorted posies' suggest that there were simply too many different sorts to be regulated in that way.
- 284 **house laughed:** The metaphor* of the house 'laughing' (cf. 46) is here strengthened by the extra touch *permulsa* ('caressed' 'soothed') appropriate in the context of a gift of flowers. *domus* of course often means 'household' as well as simply the building in which they live.

- 285 **Peneus:** here the river is personified as a river-god. Tempe is the valley between the mountains Olympus and Ossa through which the river Penios flows: it became a byword for beauty of landscape.
- 287 **daughters of Thessaly:** A famous crux. The mss read *minosim linquens doris* which makes no sense. What may have happened is that the scribe found a proper name he did not recognise and 'corrected' it to a word looking like the proper name *Minois* (60, 247) but put into something like the Greek dative plural case. If this line of thought is correct, then Heinsius' *Haemonisin* (a Greek word meaning 'for the daughters of Thessaly') would fit well: *Haemonides* is a feminine toponymic* from Haemonia, a poetic name for Thessaly. *doris* still causes difficulties: the adjective sounds as though it should mean 'Dorian', but the word *dorus* (for *dorius* or *doricus*) is unparalleled, and anyway there is nothing Dorian about the girls or their dancing. Of all the suggestions, the least implausible is Lachmann's *crebris* which strengthens the following two words both in its alliteration and in its sense.
- 288 **He ... high ... roots:** *ille* is deictic or pictorial, as Fordyce convincingly explains: 'there he was with trees in his hands'. The juxtaposition of *radicitus altis* is deliberate to emphasise the great size of these gifts – they were tall anyway, but he had them roots and all.
- 289-91 Five different sorts of tree: beech, laurel, plane, poplar and cypress trees all gathered together into a giant dendroid bouquet.
- 289 **tall ... straight:** *recto proceras* are another effective juxtaposition to emphasise that the trees are tall and straight.
- 291 **Phaethon** had foolishly taken the chariot of his father the Sun-god but found himself unable to drive it; running dangerously close to setting the earth on fire, he was blasted with the thunderbolt of Jupiter; his sisters who had yoked the horses for him and so conspired in his misdeed and death, were changed into poplar-trees – trees which weep tears of amber.
- 292 **woven together:** *contexta* tells us that Peneus wove the trees into a 'screen of foliage' (Fordyce): *late* confirms that there were a great number of trees which covered the property.
- 294-7 The arrival of Prometheus: Prometheus was a Titan, famous for giving fire to mortals, an act for which he was chained to a rock in the Caucasus while an eagle ate out his liver by day, only for it to grow back during the night. He was released from his captivity and punishment by Jupiter in return for the secret which he knew, namely that the child of Thetis was destined to be greater than its father, a secret which changed Jupiter's feelings for Thetis as shown at line 21 above.
- 294 **intelligent:** *sollerti corde* well describes the inventive and clever Prometheus (whose name in Greek means 'forethought') who created man out of clay and invented most of the arts.
- 295-7 **traces of ... :** what begins as a description of Prometheus' appearance gives the poet the opportunity to narrate (briefly but effectively) the tale of his punishment at the hands of Jupiter, the god who is right behind him in the line of deities entering the house. The poet stresses the strife between Jupiter and

Prometheus to display the disharmony which can exist even among the gods: see also 299n.

297 Note the p alliteration* and the fifth-foot caesura and spondee, well expressing the agony of the punishment.

298 **father ... wife ... sons:** A family group of Jupiter, Juno and their children, described in familial terms as 'father with his wife and children'. This line is hypermetric – that is, there is a surplus short syllable on the end which is to elide with the vowel which begins the next line; this is the only such line in Catullus' longer poems – it is found later in (e.g.) Vergil *Aeneid* 4. 558, 629.

299/300 **Phoebus ... sister:** Phoebus Apollo and his sister Diana/Artemis are not present at the wedding, partly because they are supporters of Troy (which Achilles is destined to overthrow) and partly because Apollo is destined to kill Achilles. This is a departure from earlier poets who had Apollo at the wedding (Homer *Iliad* 24.63, Pindar *Nemean* 5.41) and releases the god from the charge of treachery levelled against him by Thetis (Aeschylus fr. 450, Plato *Republic* 383b) that he sang of blessings to come at her wedding and then went on to kill her son – a future which as god of prophecy he would certainly have known when he sang his song. Catullus thus shows Apollo either as a god of integrity – or as a god with an already burning hatred of Achilles. There is no parallel for the absence of Diana/Artemis; presumably the poet invented this version to suggest the lack of total harmony among the gods.

300 **twin:** *unigenam* usually means 'only child' but cannot sustain this sense in a sentence which has only just mentioned her brother. Probably Catullus intends it to mean 'born along with' or 'Twin', which Artemis was of Apollo; the epithet is often applied to Hecate, the only child of Perseus and Asterie, and associated with Idrias in Caria, a famous cult-centre of hers founded by Idrus. Hecate was often associated with Artemis, and so paradoxically this 'only child' has a brother.

303-22 The Fates introduced.

303 **bent their limbs:** the gods do not recline in Roman style on couches, but rather sit at ivory ('snow-white') chairs, their limbs 'bent' (*flexerunt*) rather than extended horizontally.

304 The rhythm of the line is uneven, with caesuras only in the third and fifth feet, suggestive perhaps of the table groaning under the weight of the meal, the uncommon singular word *dape* showing that this mighty array of food is only one single meal. (cf. *dapem* at 79.)

305 **The Fates:** The Parcae are named as three separate women in Hesiod *Theogony* 905. The name Parcae derives, it seems from *parere* (to give birth) and denotes an ancient goddess of childbirth. The juxtaposition *veridicos Parcae* emphasises their honesty; *veridicus* is used of Epicurus by Lucretius (6.6).

shaking ... uncertain: There is a neat irony throughout this description of the Fates as infirm old women who however hold tremendous power in the knowledge they have of the future. At their first appearance here they are weak and shaking, as old people are often portrayed in Catullus (see *tremulum* below and cf. e.g. 68. 154, 61. 51).

307-9 **white ... crimson ... rose:** The colour-contrasts are repeated and striking: *candida purpurea* of their white robes with a crimson border followed by the similar *roseae niveo* to mark the shock of red ribbons on white hair.

310 **plucked ... task:** As befits goddesses with the future in their hands, they never stop spinning the thread of destiny.

311-319 The poet indulges in a highly Alexandrian description of the spinning of the Parcae, the details precise and learned, the vocabulary accurate and technical. The poet focusses on pairs – the left hand and the right hand first, and then the fingers and the thumb, then finally the teeth and the lips. These women are engaged in 'the most familiar of female household tasks in antiquity' (Quinn), while they sing of the grisly future of the greatest hero of them all.

311-4 **left ... thread:** The left hand holds the distaff or spindle covered in soft unspun wool, while the right hand draws strands of wool down from it and shapes them into a thread: every so often the right hand turns its palm downwards and twirls the weighted spindle balanced on the thumb. As in much didactic poetry, the sheer poetic skill with which the poet has managed to turn the above prosaic description into hexameter verse is superb, rounding off with a balanced line (314) to display a balanced spindle (A-B-C-B-A).

315 **tooth:** To assist the work of the hands, the old ladies use their teeth to 'smooth off' the thread: provocatively, Catullus only credits them with a singular tooth, both to express their extreme old age and also to keep the balance here of: one hand, then the other hand, then one tooth. The rhythm of the monosyllabic ending is almost unparalleled in Catullus (68.19 is the only other example) and well brings out the sharp tugging and the snap of the thread.

316 **dry little lips:** the phrase animates the picture of the Parcae into a *tableau vivant*, the (apparently) pathetic figures brought to life before they are heard to speak.

318 **soft:** *mollia* picks up *molli* in 311: the essence of the wool itself has not changed.

319 a four-word hexameter in two pairs of alliterative words.

320-22 **Carding ... :** introduces the song of the Parcae. *pellentes* is an odd word to place here – it would mean 'beating out' the fleeces to stop them tangling. Fruterius' *vellentes* makes far better sense and would be (as Fordyce comments acutely) a *figura etymologica* pointing out the linguistic connection between *vellera* and *vello*.

320/1 **poured out:** *fuderunt* gives the sense of plenty, of unstinting and unsolicited outpouring of song. *talìa* ('of this kind') does not prevent the poet from quoting what appear to be the *ipsissima verba* of the Parcae.

322 **song ... mendacity:** the poet describes the words as being a *carmen* and then immediately states that – unlike many another *carmen* perhaps – this one will not be treacherous or untrue. The Parcae will sing, but not the 'wretched stories of poets' (Euripides *Heracles* 1346); the Muses know 'how to speak many false things as if they were true' (Hesiod *Theogony* 27) but these songsmiths will tell no such falsehoods. The irony, of course, is that the exploits of Achilles are the very stuff and essence of poetic legend, and so we are presented with legendary

women in a heroic age announcing future legendary exploits – but then we are told that this will be no mere legend.

323-81 The Marriage Hymn. Unlike the hymns in poems 61 and 62, this hymn begins and ends with conventional passages of felicitation (323-36, 372-81) but then concentrates more on the exploits and character of the child of the union rather than discussing the union itself. Had the song been sung by the Muses (as in the version of the legend found in e.g. Euripides *Iphigeneia at Aulis* 1040ff), then there would have been less scope for the poet to turn his eyes towards the next generation as he does. The hymn – like poems 61 and 62 – makes use of the refrain at slightly irregular intervals, but the refrain here is peculiar to the activity on which the women are engaged rather than the more common exclamation to the god of Weddings. The device of using a refrain is a feature especially of Alexandrian poetry (see e.g. Theocritus 1 and 2) imitated by Roman poets.

323-4 **You:** The hymn begins with an address to Peleus in three phrases: first general praise, then more personal address. *eximium magnis* is emphatic juxtaposition, the two nouns *decus* (natural and/or inherited quality) and *virtutibus* (chosen acts of valour) held apart by the two adjectives. Peleus adds to his already rich fund of glory with freely chosen bravery.

324 **fortress of Thessaly ...** : cf. 26: Emathia is roughly equivalent to Thessaly; strictly speaking the name refers to Macedonia. Ops is the Roman equivalent of the Greek goddess Rhea, mother of Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto. The phrase 'dearest to the son of Ops' is modelled on the Homeric *diiphilos*, although Homer does not actually use it of Peleus.

325-6 **on this happy day** the sisters will give the couple a gift of the truth. *luce* is no mere poetic synonym for 'day' but adds to the imagery of light and brightness found in the whole description of the wedding and the palace, and is appropriate here as the sisters bring what is hidden (the future) out into the light.

326-7 **drawing ... run:** On its first appearance, the refrain has an explanatory gloss in the preceding line which is not repeated later on. The *subtegmina* are the 'transverse threads woven in between the warp threads in a loom, the weft' (OLD s.v.) which rather anticipates the use to which this spun thread will be put and implies the traditional picture of the Fates cutting the thread of a man's life and thus determining its length. Quinn acutely observes that 'spinning implies weaving ... and it is not hard to imagine an elaboration of the traditional image, in which human existence becomes a pattern of warp and weft upon the loom.' The Fates, it is asserted, follow the weaving of the yarn; the spinning of the threads is of course a metaphor for the spinning of men's fates. Note here the repetition of *currite* in the first and fifth foot, and cf. the repetitions in the refrains in *o Hymenaeae Hymen, o Hymen Hymenaeae* (61.4-5 etc) and again *Hymen o Hymenaeae, Hymen ades o Hymenaeae* (62.5 etc).

328-32 Sentiments similar to those of poem 62: the Evening Star Hesperus will unite the newly-wed couple.

- 328 **The Evening Star:** personification of Hesperus is increased here with the poetic conceit of the star 'carrying' what husbands desire: note also that the name of the subject of the verbs is delayed until the following line.
- 329 **will come:** repetition of *adveniet* to give a pleasant accumulatory ring to the list of who is going to come: the star, and with the star the wife ... Hesperus is a *faustus* star in that he brings the joy of the union, less so in the tragedy which its offspring will wreak.
- 330 **soul-twisting:** *flexanimo* is an effective compound adjective equivalent to *animum flectens*; the imagery of diverting the mind with floods of love is redolent of the seduction of Zeus in Homer *Iliad* 14. 153-351 (cf. especially Aphrodite's 'zone, on which are ... beguilements ... and passion of sex, and the whispered lovers' talk which steals the mind away even from the thoughtful (214-17)) or then again the seduction of Mars by Venus in Lucretius 1. 33-40.
- 331 **languid little sleeps:** the diminutive is effective.
- 332 Catullus deliberately chose not to write a Golden Line* *levia robusto substernens brachia collo*, perhaps feeling that the intimacy of the lovers did not require such grandeur. There is a still a contrast between the 'smooth' arms of Thetis and the muscular neck of Peleus, the whole phrase looking forward to the coupling which will take place.
- 334-6 **No home ... :** A felicitation or *makarismos* akin to that at 22-30. The sense that this is the 'best ever' union is emphasised by the double anaphora* of *nulla ... tales: nullus ... tali* and then also *qualis ... qualis*. The imagery of shelter is there in *contexit*, the function of the house being perfectly executed, as was the house of the poet's friend when loaned to him for his meetings with his lover in 68.68. *foedere* is a typically Catullan word to refer to the 'bond' of mutual love (cf. 373, 87.3, 109.6)
- 338-71 **Achilles** and his deeds are prophesied, bringing out the full force of Prometheus' secret that the child of Thetis would grow up to be greater than its father.
- 339 **front ... not ... back:** Achilles' bravery is assured by the fact that his enemies never see him running away, but only attacking.
- 340-1 **running:** A nice unpacking of Homer's common epithet 'swift-footed Achilles': and also a reference to his legendary hunting abilities whereby 'he killed stags without dogs, for he excelled in swiftness of foot' (Pindar *Nemean* 3. 51-2). Note here the double alliteration* of *vago victor certamine cursus* and then the same alliteration varied in *praevertet celeris vestigia cervae*.
- 343-6 **hero:** *heros* is concessive in force: – nobody – not even a hero – would dare ...
- 344 **The Phrygian plains:** the fields around Troy; Teucric means 'Trojan', as Teucer was the first king of Troy. Note the poet's variation of vocabulary here. Here also is the first hint of brutality as the fields are 'seeping' with blood.
- 345 **drawn-out:** *longinquus* means 'long-drawn out' rather than 'far-flung' and refers here to the 10-year siege (*obsidens*) of the city-walls (*moenia*).
- 346 **third heir of ... Pelops:** According to Homer (*Iliad* 2.105ff) Pelops left his sceptre to Atreus, who in turn left it to Thyestes, who in turn left it to Agamemnon, who thus is named here the 'third heir of Pelops'. Myrtilus was Oenomaus' charioteer, bribed by Pelops with a promise of half his kingdom if he

would help him win the race and secure the marriage with Hippodameia but murdered after the event. The whole line is a typical piece of allusive, learned poetry which tests the reader's knowledge of the legends and the literature: Catullus is also carefully not stating that Achilles routed Troy – he was dead before the end of the Trojan War – but in his allusion to treacherous Pelops he is hinting at the use of trickery and treachery in the final defeat, implying that after the death of Achilles, dishonest tactics had to be resorted to.

348-51 mothers ... hands: A startling sentence: the brilliant successes of Achilles will be reported by grieving and ugly old women whose sons he has killed; the tone of heroic pride and glory quickly turning to pathos and then the grotesque. For the sadness of parents lamenting their sons killed in battle, cf. Croesus in Herodotus 1. 87 ('in war fathers bury their sons, instead of sons burying their fathers') and also Hecabe and Priam over the dead Hector in Homer *Iliad* 22.405-36, especially Priam's appeal (420-2) to Achilles' father Peleus ('He too has a father like me, Peleus, who sired and reared him as a suffering to the Trojans ...'). For Achilles' ruthlessness towards the young, see e.g. Homer *Iliad* 20. 460-489.

350-1 The two common expressions of female grief are the letting down of the hair and the beating of the breast. The first of them is made more poignant by the telling detail *cano* – their hair is white with age: the second is made grotesque by the adjective *putrida* – unlike the breasts of the sea-nymphs at 18 or the *lactentis papillas* of Ariadne at 65, these breasts are decayed and incapable of nursing any new sons to replace the dead. *variabunt* is then visual: they will 'colour' their breasts with bruises.

353-5 harvester: Commentators point to Homer *Iliad* 11. 67-71 as the source for this image of Achilles harvesting the bodies of the enemy in the blazing heat: 'as reapers against each other drive their swathes in a field of wheat or barley belonging to a rich man, and the handfuls are falling thick and fast ...' *Iliad* 20. 495-503 also uses an agricultural simile to compare with the slaughter of Achilles: 'as when a man yokes ... oxen to crush white barley on a strong-laid threshing-floor, and quickly the barley is stripped beneath the feet of the bellowing oxen, so the horses trampled bodies and shields before great-hearted Achilles, and the axle under his chariot was splashed with blood ...' Catullus has echoed the language of *Iliad* 11 but the mood is that of *Iliad* 20 – note especially the verb *prosternet*.

354 blazing sun: The poet mentions the blazing sun to give more point to the colour of *flaventia* and also to evoke the stifling heat as the hero mows his meadow of corpses.

355 sons of Troy: The epic name *Troiugenum* begins the golden line* with a suitably elevated sound: epic is of course the genre in which the exploits of Achilles always were celebrated.

357 Scamander is the main river in the area of Troy, a river at which Achilles totally defeated the Trojans in Homer *Iliad* 21.

358 which ... Hellespont: A needless geographical placing? 'An ornamental, distancing line' (Quinn)? There is a (distant) thematic linking in that the Hellespont is named after Helle, who perished after falling off the golden-fleeced

ram which was carrying Helle and Phrixus (children of Athamas) away from their evil stepmother Ino: Phrixus arrived with the ram in Colchis, and was received kindly by King Aeetes – the ram was sacrificed and its golden fleece hung up, to be captured by the Argonauts in due course. The sailing of the Argo was hinted at in the opening lines of this poem, and so it is perhaps fitting that the same event should be alluded to towards the end, in the context of the water swallowing up the bodies of the dead. There is also a nice contrast of the rapid current of 358 being choked and stopped in 359–60.

- 359-60 **stream ... blood:** A grim piece of realism: the channel of the river is narrowed (*angustans*) by the dam of bodies choking it: these bodies are piled high (*acervis*) and the warm blood raises the temperature in the river water (*tepefaciet*).
- 362-4 **sacrifice:** The sacrifice of Polyxena is here referred to in general terms: a more specific account of this ghastly event follows in 368-70, the Parcae (and the poet) emphasising the horror by the repetition. Polyxena was the youngest daughter of Priam and Hecuba, sacrificed at the tomb of Achilles to appease his ghost, an act of human sacrifice to mirror that at the beginning of the war when Agamemnon slaughtered his daughter Iphigeneia to make the wind blow the fleet from Aulis where they had become becalmed: Catullus' version of this sacrifice owes something both to Euripides' account in the *Hecuba* (521-82) and also to Lucretius' account of the death of Iphigeneia at l. 84-101. For a full account of Euripides' version of the tale in *Hecuba* and its symbolism, see now Mossman (1995) 142-163. Even more interesting is the fact that Polyxena was slain to be a 'bride' for the dead Achilles, thus neatly fitting the context of a wedding song with grim irony.
- 362 **even ... dead:** The greatness of the hero (and the futility of the sacrifice?) are well brought out by the phrase *morti quoque* – even when he is dead he will still receive booty (*praeda*).
- 363 **rounded ... lofty:** The whole line focusses on the tomb of Achilles, built up (*coacervatum*) and rounded (*teres*) and grand as befits a great hero.
- 364 **snowy ... struck dead:** The pathos is obvious as Polyxena is referred to as the 'knocked-out maiden' and her limbs are 'snowy-white'.
- 366 **tired:** The Greeks are understandably tired after ten years of war: it is only 'fortune' which gives them the chance to defeat Troy, presumably in the trick of the wooden horse.
- 367 **untie the Neptunian bonds:** refers to Homer's phrase 'undo the holy coronal of Troy' (*Iliad* 16.100) meaning the walls of the city which had first been built by Dardanus and then later rebuilt by Neptune for Laomedon, father of Priam. Note here the concentration of names *Dardaniae Neptunia*.
- 368 A form of Golden Line*, with the nouns and adjectives arranged chiastically*. The tomb of Achilles will be made wet with the blood of Polyxena.
- 369-70 **two-edged ... buckle:** the tone becomes suddenly realistic: note the detail of *ancipiti* and the telling observation *summisso poplite*, her reaction to the blow given in three separate verbs: first she 'gives way under' it (*succumbens*), then she throws her torso forward (*proiciet*) and her knees buckle, leaving her at the end of the sentence a mere body (*corpus*), anonymous and dead. The rhythm of *truncum summisso* is slow and heavy with assonance of *-uncum summ-*. The knees

buckling reminds us of Lucretius' Iphigeneia who 'sank to the ground giving way at the knees' (1.92).

372 **And so:** *quare* is breathtaking: does the slaughter of Polyxena justify and recommend the marriage of the parents of Achilles? The Parcae appear to slip into traditional Marriage-hymn style without considering the link with what immediately precedes it, or else the irony is poignant and deliberate.

373-4 **Let the husband ... let the bride:** The balanced pair of lines linger on the giving of the bride to the groom: in the first line he is to receive her, in the second she is to be given to him in his desire. For *foedere* as a bond of love and/or marriage, see 335, 87.3, 109.6.

376-80 **wind her neck ...** : i.e. the neck-band of yesterday will no longer fit the bride: 'Among the ancients an old wives' tale held that the consummation of a marriage was confirmed by the bride's expanded neck-size' (Goold, citing Nemesianus 2.10) The word *filo* here recalls the *filum* given by Ariadne to save Theseus (113) and also the thread spun by the Parcae (317). The text here is difficult: most editors agree to omit the refrain put into line 378 and first excised by Bergk, although it is not impossible for the poet to break up the stanza into two groups of two lines each, the one referring to the nurse giving the girl the neck-band test, the other referring more generally to the would-be grandmother.

379-80 **fearful ... sad:** The mother is given two adjectives here, *anxia* at the possibility of marital discord and then *maesta* if it occurs.

384-408 **EPILOGUE:** for discussion of this section see the Appendix at the end of the commentary.

384/5 **pure ... heroes:** Gods came in person, because the homes of men were chaste (*castas*), and their owners were (enjambement*) heroes (*heroum*).

385/6 **gathering:** *coetu* has the sense of social and sexual union here – literally so as Peleus has married a goddess. The theme of 'showing' is important here also, reminding us of the showing of the Sea-nymphs' bare bodies at lines 16-18.

386 **heaven-dwellers:** The poet employs the grand epic term *caelicolae* (cf. *pater divum* in the next line) to promote the grandeur and the greatness of men of old. *solebant* is also emphasised: they were actually in the habit of coming down – this was not an isolated occurrence – cf. *saepe ... revisens* in the next line.

387 **gleaming:** The temple is perhaps described as 'shining' both in the gleaming of the gold and silver which was laid down there and also in the imagery of brightness and light which permeates the poem, especially where the grand abode is being described: cf. 43-9.

389 **saw:** Jupiter both saw and was seen; note the alliteration* of *c* and *t* here. The sacrifice is a suitably grand hecatomb (for which see Homer *Odyssey* 7.202); the language reminds us of the sacrifice of Polyxena in 369-70.

390 **Liber** is Dionysus or Bacchus, who has already appeared in this poem rescuing Ariadne. Note here the evocative use of names (*Liber Parnasi ... Thyadas ... Delphi*). Parnassus is the mountain overlooking Delphi and reckoned to be a dwelling of Dionysus and his female followers.

391 **euantis** is an onomatopoeic* word (= *euazein* in Greek) for the ritual cry of the Bacchants. The female worshippers of Dionysus are called Thyiads here and are a

- familiar feature of his worship, as in lines 254-64. The poet here reminds us of the figure of Dionysus rescuing Ariadne, as indeed he reminds us of Ariadne compared to a statue of a bacchant at line 61. Bacchants usually have their hair down in a spirit of abandonment ... rather like Ariadne who was literally abandoned and let her hair down in line 63, and like the grief-stricken frenzy of the old women whose white hair was dishevelled at line 350.
- 392 **Delphi** is here the people of Delphi, who were *laeti* to receive the god on altars smoking with sacrificial offerings.
- 394 **death-delivering:** *letifero* is another epic compound, and *Mavors* is the archaic form of the name Mars as in Lucretius 1.32, 1.475, 5.1296. The gods here are referred to in a highly allusive and scholarly manner, in the tradition of epic poetry.
- 395 **racing:** *rapidi* is not just quick but also 'snatching' (deriving from *rapio*). The mistress of the Triton is Athena, Homer's *Tritogeneia* (cf. Lucretius 6.750), who was born on the river Triton. The mss then read *ramunsia* which was emended to *Amarunsia* by Baehrens ('Amarunsian maiden') and would presumably refer to Artemis (deriving from Amarynthus in Euboea), a goddess who does indeed come down to fight in Homer (*Iliad* 20. 39) along with Ares and Athena. Others argue however that the simpler emendation *Ramnusia* is correct, referring to Nemesis as at 66.71 and 68.77 (from her shrine at Rhamnus in Attica). 'Catullus is very likely thinking of Hesiod's Nemesis, who will desert mankind at the end of the iron age (*Works and Days* 197-200).' (Quinn) There is no certainty here, but the context does favour Artemis – indeed the original reading *Amarunsia* might have been 'corrected' to *Ramnusia* and then corrupted to *ramunsia*. The present context is one of Homeric-type fighting where the goddess actually appears and encourages the troops, not a personified force leaving them at the end of the iron age.
- 397-406 The jeremiad against contemporary immorality brings out four specific examples of wickedness involving relationships between: brothers, children, parents and gods. The metaphor in *imbuta* is liquid, reinforced and specified in the following line as brothers' blood.
- 398 **lustful:** There is no moral objection to being *cupidus* in itself: it is simply that these people allowed their desires to overcome their sense of justice, with the strong metaphor of Justice being routed and made to flee. Note also the juxtaposition (over two lines) of *fugarunt*, *perfudere*: the one leading inexorably to the next.
- 397/9 **soaked ... wet:** The liquid imagery in *imbuta* is now made specific as it is blood being poured on to hands – and brothers' hands at that. For the repetition of *fraterno ... fratres* compare Lucretius 3. 72 ('they cruelly rejoice over the sad death of a brother'), Vergil *Georgics* 2.510. The worst example of brotherly killing is probably the murder of Remus by Romulus – from the 'heroic age'. Note here how the verbs are all placed emphatically at the start of the three lines.
- 400-1 **the son** stops mourning his parents (which is bad enough), then the father actually wishes his son dead (worse still). The force of the first statement is that

sons ceased to mourn for parents *at all*, rather than that they began to mourn and then stopped.

401-4 The corruption of marriage and the corrupting power of sex – both appropriate in this poem – are explored in grotesque and perverted forms.

402 **new young wife:** Many editors follow the mss reading *innuptae novercae* with the paradox of 'unmarried stepmother'; the sense then is that the man murders his son so that his son will not be in the way when he marries a woman young enough to be his daughter. For the crime Quinn compares Sallust *Catiline* 15 of Catiline's incestuous marriage with Orestilla, 'because she hesitated whether to marry him, fearing his grown-up son, it is believed that he murdered his son and thus rendered his house empty for his wicked wedding'. *novercae* is thus anticipatory of the relationship that the bride would have had with the son if he had not been killed. Much better sense, however, is found in Maehly's *uti nuptae* with Baehrens' *novellae* for *novercae*, so that it is (possibly) the son's wife whom the father is marrying after he has killed her husband – although the text does not specify that it is the son's wife. There is no obvious topical reference here of a man who killed the son and married the daughter-in-law – but then the wicked man might have killed the son simply to avoid the rivalry over his young new wife which his son might present, and the whole scenario is strongly redolent of 67.23-4 and the plot of Plautus' *Casina*. For the imagery of plucking the flower of love cf. Lucretius 4.1105-6.

403-4 **laying ... unwitting:** the clearest parallel to this story (noted by Dee (1982) 109 n.20) is that found in Parthenius *Erotic sufferings* 17: it concerns the mother of Periander, tyrant of Corinth, who conceived such a desire for her son, that she tricked him into becoming her lover in the following way: she told him that a certain beautiful lady wished to be his lover but that she refused to be identified and so insisted on the lights being put out when she visited him. When Periander discovered the truth he began to develop the insanity for which he became famed (suggested by *furor* 405); this is certainly closer than either Pasiphae tricking the bull (who was not her son), Gellius and his mother (in Poem 74), or Oedipus and Jocasta, who both acted in complete ignorance, at least in the Sophoclean version of the story. It is still difficult to explain why Catullus should round off his 'contemporary' catalogue with a tale from old Corinth, however – unless the whole sequence is taken from a Greek source and this original *cause célèbre* was transmitted along with the rest.

405 **speakable and unspeakable:** *fanda nefanda*; the asyndeton* reveals the muddled state of morals in a muddled form of words, made explicit in *permixta*. *furor* ('madness') is used in Latin both of intense emotions of love, anger etc and also of hallucination whereby we are 'out of our minds'.

406 **turned:** is almost a repeat of 398, but whereas there it was mortals driving justice out of their minds, here it is the justice-making mind of the gods being repelled by our behaviour.

407-8 **That is why ... :** *quare* brings us back to the topic, as at 372. *lumine claro* suggests both 'the light of day' and also 'clear vision' (cf. Lucretius 4.824 'the bright lights of the eyes were created so that we might see our way').

APPENDIX: 384-408 EPILOGUE: the contrast is drawn between the heroic past and the unheroic present; the days when gods mixed with men are now gone. The wistful longing for the old days of familiarity between gods and men is at least as old as Homer *Odyssey* 7. 201-206, where King Alcinous says of Odysseus '... for in the past they have always appeared plain to see as gods when we sacrifice sumptuous hecatombs, and they feast sitting with us where we sit. Even when a lonely traveller meets them, they make no concealment, for we are close to them, like the Cyclopes and the wild tribes of the Giants.' Of even greater interest here is the manner in which the poet switches from an (apparently) impersonal narrative account of the past to a more involved personal assessment of the present. The epilogue divides into two sections: 13 lines of glorious description of the past followed by 12 lines explaining and decrying the present. The tone of the first half is rich in evocative proper names (*Liber Parnasi ... Thyadas ... Delphi* etc), in epic usages (*caelicolae ... Mavors*) and epithets (*rapidi Tritonis era, letifero belli certamine*) and the poetic voice is unashamedly hyperbolic* in its approval (the homes of these *heroum* were chaste (*castas*), the sacrifice was of a hundred oxen, the worshippers 'ran' out of the 'entire' city 'racing' each other to receive the god). The tone of the second half is equally hyperbolic, the wickedness of the present being every bit as extreme as the piety of the past: the earth is now 'soaked' with 'evil crime', the hands 'wet' with brothers' blood (the 'wetness' image of *imbuta* being both reinforced and made specific), parents and children wish each other dead (the reciprocity brought out by the chiasmic *gnatus ... parentes ... genitor ... nati*, the pathos intensified by the adjective *primaevi* – the first child being the occasion of great rejoicing in 'normal' marriages as shown in the sentimental picture of 'little Manlius' in 61. 209-218), or even commit incest, lust (in all its forms) pushing aside all moral principles.

The two sections of the epilogue have a wry and ironic symmetry about them: just as the 'father of gods' was pleased with the death of a large number of animals (387-9), so also the modern father seeks the death of his son: the god Bacchus is called by his title *Liber* to point up the contrast with the wicked father who kills his son in order to be *liber* (402). The last image of the first part is that of the god Mars and the goddesses Athena (Minerva) and Artemis (Diana) rousing the troops to do battle in the 'death-bringing struggle of war': the second section begins with the earth soaked in 'unspeakable crime'. The glorious war of the one and the unspeakable crime of the other, the hecatomb of Jupiter and the murder of a son all produce death as their end-product; but they are not judged in the same way. This is perhaps behind the rather odd phrase 'everything both speakable and unspeakable mingled together in wicked madness' (405): actions which in other contexts might be quite respectable are corrupted into wickedness by the 'madness' of the age. The gods are the guarantors of justice: when men put justice out of their minds the gods ceased to consort with them (398) and human wickedness turned 'the just-making mind of the gods' away from us, the household gods being 'adulterated' by the incestuous mother. The poet leaves the gods literally in obscurity, removed from contact with 'the clear light of day' and thinking it beneath them to visit 'such unions' – unions like that of Peleus and Thetis which can no longer happen – unless the gods consent to marry us.

The ending of this poem has aroused acute interest. On the surface it shows self-evidently the poet lamenting that the sort of events he has described do not occur any more and is one of several pessimistic endings in Roman poetry, arousing similar questions to those surrounding the ending of the *Aeneid* and the *de rerum natura*. Like

those of those two poems, the ending has its roots in earlier texts in addition to personal comment: first of all Hesiod concludes his catalogue of the degenerating races of humankind with the following condemnatory account of his own times:

'Now is a race of iron, toil and grief all day and death by night ... the father will not agree with his children, nor they with him, nor guest with host, nor friend with friend, nor will brothers be dear to each other as they once were. They will be quick to dishonour their ageing parents, they will censure them, carping with words of bitterness in their hardness of heart and ignorance of the fear of the gods ... and then Shame and Nemesis, wrapping their fair skin in white garments, will leave the broad-pathed earth and abandon mankind to go to Olympos to join the gathering of the immortal gods. Painful grief will be left to mortal men, with no defence against evil.' (*Works and Days* 176-201)

The parallels with our text are obvious: the breakdown of relationships and the departure of the gods leaving us to suffer. It is inconceivable that Catullus could have composed the ending of this poem without reminiscence of Hesiod, and equally inconceivable that his readers would not recognise it also. Hesiod does not of course have all the gods departing, as does Catullus: the point Hesiod is stressing is that if Shame and Nemesis (personified forces which inhibit us from doing wrong) have left the earth, then there really will be no protection from a jungle mentality and we will be prey to evil of our own making, the verbs being decisively in the future tense. Catullus adapts this idea interestingly: the gods are the preservers of justice and right, but their departure is the result of our wrongdoing and not its cause as in Hesiod, and what is in the Greek poem an elegant anthropomorphic metaphor for human loss of respect for society's laws becomes in Catullus an aetiological myth explaining the observable fact that gods do not share our human lives although legend states that they once did. We rejected Right, and the gods have rejected our company as a result.

Closer still to Catullus' view of things is Aratus, who in his *Phaenomena* explained the departure of Justice from the earth to become the constellation Virgo on the grounds of our wickedness. Human history began with a Golden Age – something like the world evoked in the opening 49 lines of this poem – and for a while all was well:

'Justice ... of old lived on earth and met men face to face, and did not despise (cf. *dignantur* 407) the races of men and women, but mingling with them sat down (cf. 303), although she was immortal ... not yet did men have any knowledge of grievous fighting or insulting disagreement or the noise of battle (cf. 394-6), but they lived a simple life. The cruel sea was far from them, not yet did ships (cf. 1-13) bring their livelihood from miles away, but oxen, the plough (cf. 38-42) and Justice herself, giver of just things ... plentifully supplied all their needs' (Aratus 100-113)

(The golden race gives way to the silver race: Justice still lives on the earth but less willingly so and she tends to stay high up on the hill away from the cities: from there she would address the assembled crowd and threaten them:)

'What a race your golden fathers produced – worse than themselves. You will produce even worse yourselves. Wars and savage bloodshed (such as that of Achilles in 338-360) will be the lot of men and painful suffering shall come upon them' (123-6).

The subsequent race of bronze were the first men 'to forge the brigand's sword, the first to eat the meat of the plough-ox' and so Justice flew up to the heavens where she is visible as a constellation.

Once again, it is almost certain that Catullus had these lines in mind when he composed this text. The literary reminiscence of Hesiod through Aratus places Catullus in a tradition of didacticism which he exploits, using the colour of the earlier poets in an archly allusive manner. On the one hand it is totally appropriate that the poem which has been narrating legendary deeds should finish off with this flourish of an aetiological myth to draw a terminal line under the tale with the explanation of why such tales can never be repeated, using one myth to close the others; on the other, it is surely oversimplistic to see the 'moral' criticism of society in lines 397-408 as straight-faced and sincere when its 'sources' are so clearly literary rather than sociological. The individual crimes referred to are suggestive of the world of tragedy (fratricide and incest occurring in the pages of Sophocles more often than on the *Via Appia*) or perhaps the psychologically contorted Love-romances of Catullus' contemporary Parthenius, rather than to the well-documented sources on the Roman vices of corruption and ambition.

The result of this 'borrowing' from earlier Greek poets is paradoxical and two-fold. On the one hand it allows the poet to append his own signature to the poem by bringing the tale of 'once upon a time' (*quondam* 1) right up to his own age (*nobis* 406): this form of closure reflects the poet's shifting of perspective from the past to the present, from the lofty to the degraded, from god's-eye to worm's-eye, and is echoed in poems such as Horace *Epode* 2, the ending of the *ecphrasis** on the Shield of Aeneas in Vergil *Aeneid* 8. 729-31 and Propertius 1.3. Somewhat similar is poem 68, except that Catullus here waits until the end before showing us what appears to be a personal standpoint, while there the mythical and the personal are intertwined throughout. On the other hand, this closure is supremely 'literary' and is therefore unlike those of Vergil and Horace: the poet here masquerades as a moralist, but the fact that his words are so close to earlier sources has the effect of putting them into inverted commas and casting ironic doubts on their 'sincerity'. Catullus does not lack moral convictions – poem 76 is full of moral feeling, for instance – but the allusive language in this epilogue does leave us with a disturbingly unclear picture of the poet's 'own' view. It shows a poet signing off his poem with an irony which both enhances its artificiality and distances our emotional involvement: it signals to the reader that the whole of the foregoing is artefact and not document.

Finally, the epilogue contains hints and echoes of earlier parts of the poem: the slaying of bulls for Jupiter and the spilling of brother's blood both remind us of the slaying of the Minotaur, (Ariadne's 'brother' 150, 181), the sacrifice for the gods recalling the sacrifice of Polyxena, the entrance of Bacchus with his entourage is a clear reminiscence of 251-64, the warfare of Mars recalls the battles of Achilles in 338-360 or the 'death or glory' of Theseus in 101-2, the expulsion of justice by lust recalls Ariadne's bitter account of male lust in 145-8, the death of parents reminds us of Theseus 'killing' of Aegeus by his forgetfulness, while the man who kills family to secure his lover is a gender-reversed reminder of Ariadne who did exactly that. The poet's final instance of human wickedness (the mother deceiving her son into incest 403-4) is quite unlike anything in the poem and emerges hyperbolically out of the sexual desire of the previous line. The effect of the epilogue is, then, a recapitulation of key themes and events in the poem, a teasing adaptation of earlier material into an apparently new and contemporary piece of comment. Once again, we are pleased by the artistry of this but our sureness of the poet's intention is unsettled by it. It is the last of many paradoxes and ambiguities with which this poem leaves us.